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"Lullaby"

*Memorial Edition*

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# The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

IN TEN VOLUMES

*Including Poems and Prose Sketches, many  
of which have not heretofore been pub-  
lished; an authentic Biography, an  
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VOLUME II



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SAN RAFAEL, CAL.

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS  
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# The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

T. C. PHILIPS

O NOBLE heart, and brave impetuous hand!  
So all engrossed in work of public weal  
Thou couldst not pause thy own distress to feel  
While maladies of Wrong oppressed the land.  
The hopes that marshaled at thy pen's command  
To cheer the Right, had not the power to heal  
The ever-aching wounds thou didst conceal  
Beneath a front so stoically bland  
That no one guessed thy inward agony,—  
Until the Master, leaning from his throne,  
Heard some soul wailing in an undertone,  
And bending lower down, discovered thee,  
And clasped thy weary hand within His own  
And lifted thee to rest eternally.



## A DREAM UNFINISHED

ONLY a dream unfinished ; only a form at rest  
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful breast.

And the lonesome light of summer through the  
open doorway falls,  
But it wakes no laugh in the parlor—no voice in  
the vacant halls.

It throws no spell of music over the slumbrous air ;  
It meets no step on the carpet—no form in the  
easy chair.

It finds no queenly presence blessing the solitude  
With the gracious benediction of royal womanhood.

It finds no willowy figure tilting the cage that  
swings  
With the little pale canary that forgets the song  
he sings.

No face at the open window to welcome the fragrant breeze;  
No touch at the old piano to waken the sleeping keys.

The idle book lies open, and the folded leaf is pressed  
Over the half-told story while death relates the rest.

Only a dream unfinished; only a form at rest,  
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful breast.

The light steals into the corner where the darkest shadows are,  
And sweeps with its golden fingers the strings of the mute guitar.

And over the drooping mosses it clammers the rustic stand,  
And over the ivy's tresses it trails a trembling hand.

But it brings no smile from the darkness—it calls no face from the gloom—  
No song flows out of the silence that aches in the empty room.

And we look in vain for the dawning in the depths  
of our despair,  
Where the weary voice goes wailing through the  
empty aisles of prayer.

And the hands reach out through the darkness for  
the touches we have known  
When the icy palms lay warmly in the pressure of  
our own:

When the folded eyes were gleaming with a glory  
God designed  
To light a way to Heaven by the smiles they left  
behind.

Only a dream unfinished; only a form at rest  
With weary hands clasped lightly over a peaceful  
breast.



## A CHILD'S HOME—LONG AGO

READ AT AN OLD SETTLERS' MEETING AT OAKLAND,  
INDIANA, AUGUST 3, 1878.

THE terse old maxim of the poet's pen,  
"What constitutes a state? High-minded men,"  
Holds such a wealth of truth, when one reflects,  
It seems more like a sermon than a text.  
Yet looking dimly backward o'er the years  
Where first the face of progress, through our tears,  
Smiles on us, where within the forest gloom  
The bud of Indiana bursts in bloom;  
We can but see, from Lake of Michigan,  
To where Ohio rolls, the work of man—  
From where our eastern boundary-line is pressed,  
To where the Wabash revels on the west;  
A broad expanse of fair and fertile land,  
Like some rich landscape, from a master's hand,  
That in its rustic frame, we well might call  
The fairest picture on Columbia's wall—  
A picture now—a masterpiece divine,  
That, ere the artist's hand in its design

Had traced this loveliness, was but a blot  
Of ugly pigment on a barren spot—  
A blur of color on a hueless ground  
Where scarce a hint of beauty could be found.  
But patiently the hand of labor wrought,  
And from each touch new inspiration caught;  
Toiled on through disadvantages untold,  
And at each onward step found firmer hold,  
And obstacles that threatened long delay  
He climbed above and went upon his way,  
Until at last, exulting, he could see  
The sweet reward of patient industry;  
And beauties he had hardly dared to dream,  
In hill and vale, and cliff and winding stream,  
Spread out before his vision, till the soul  
Within him seemed to leap beyond control,  
And hover over lands the genii made  
Of sifted sunshine and of dew-washed shade.

And who, indeed, that loves his native state,  
Has not a heart to throb and palpitate  
With ecstasy, as o'er her wintry past,  
He sees the sun of summer dawn at last,  
And catches, through the misty shower of light,  
Dim glimpses of the orchards' bloom of white,  
And fields beyond where, waving empty sleeves,  
The "scarecrow" beckons to the feathered thieves  
That perch, and perk their nimble heads away,  
And flit away with harsh, discordant cry,  
Or shading with his hand, his dazzled eyes,  
Looks out across the deadened paradise,

Where wild flowers blossom, and the ivy clings,  
And from the ruined oak the grapevine swings,  
While high above upon the leafless tree  
The red-head drummer beats his reveille,  
And, like an army thronging at the sound,  
The soldier corn-stalks on their battle-ground  
March on to harvest victories, and flaunt  
Their banners o'er the battlements of want!

And musing thus to-day, the pioneer  
Whose brawny arm has grubbed a pathway here,  
Stands, haply; with his vision backward turned  
To where the log-heap of the past was burned,  
And sees again, as in some shadowy dream,  
The wild deer bending o'er the hidden stream,  
Or sniffing, with his antlers lifted high,  
The gawky crane, as he comes trailing by,  
And drops in shallow tides below to wade  
On tilting legs through dusky depths of shade,  
While just across the glossy otter slips  
Like some wet shadow 'neath the ripple's lips  
As, drifting from the thicket-hid bayou,  
The wild duck paddles past his rendezvous,  
And overhead the beech and sycamore,  
That lean their giant forms from either shore,  
Clasp hands and bow their heads, as though to bless  
In whispered prayer the sleeping wilderness.  
A scene of such magnificent expanse  
Of nameless grandeur that the utterance  
Of even feathered orators is faint.  
For here the dove's most melancholy plaint

Invokes no echo, and the killdeer's call  
Swoons in the murmur of the waterfall  
That, faint and far away and undefined,  
Falls like a ghost of sound upon the mind.  
The voice of nature's very self drops low,  
As though she whispered of the long ago,  
When down the wandering stream the rude canoe  
Of some lone trapper glided into view,  
And loitered down the watery path that led  
Through forest depths that only knew the tread  
Of savage beasts; and wild barbarians  
That skulked about with blood upon their hands  
And murder in their hearts. The light of day  
Might barely pierce the gloominess that lay  
Like some dark pall across the water's face,  
And folded all the land in its embrace;  
The panther's whimper, and the bear's low growl—  
The snake's sharp rattle, and the wolf's wild howl;  
The owl's grim chuckle, as it rose and fell  
In alternation with the Indian's yell,  
Made fitting prelude for the gory plays  
That were enacted in the early days.

But fancy, soaring o'er the storm of grief  
Like that lone bird that brought the olive leaf,  
Brings only peace—an amulet whose spell  
Works stranger marvels than the tongue can tell—  
For o'er the vision, like a mirage, falls  
The old log cabin with its dingy walls,  
And crippled chimney with its crutch-like prop  
Beneath a sagging shoulder at the top:

The coonskin battened fast on either side—  
The wisps of leaf-tobacco—"cut-and-dried";  
The yellow strands of quartered apples, hung  
In rich festoons that tangle in among  
The morning-glory vines that clamber o'er  
The little clapboard roof above the door:  
The old well-sweep that drops a courtesy  
To every thirsting soul so graciously,  
The stranger, as he drains the dripping gourd,  
Intuitively murmurs, "Thank the Lord!"  
Again through mists of memory arise  
The simple scenes of home before the eyes:—  
The happy mother, humming, with her wheel,  
The dear old melodies that used to steal  
So drowsily upon the summer air,  
The house-dog hid his bone, forgot his care,  
And nestled at her feet, to dream, perchance,  
Some cooling dream of winter-time romance:  
The square of sunshine through the open door  
That notched its edge across the puncheon floor,  
And made a golden coverlet whereon  
The god of slumber had a picture drawn  
Of Babyhood, in all the loveliness  
Of dimpled cheek and limb and linsey dress:  
The bough-filled fireplace, and the mantel wide,  
Its fire-scorched ankles stretched on either side,  
Where, perched upon its shoulders 'neath the joist,  
The old clock hiccoughed, harsh and husky-voiced,  
And snarled the premonition, dire and dread,  
When it should hammer Time upon the head:

Tomatoes, red and yellow, in a row,  
Preserved not then for diet, but for show,—  
Like rare and precious jewels in the rough  
Whose worth was not appraised at half enough:  
The jars of jelly, with their dusty tops;  
The bunch of pennyroyal; the cordial drops;  
The flask of camphor, and the vial of squills,  
The box of buttons, garden-seeds, and pills;  
And, ending all the mantel's bric-à-brac,  
The old, time-honored "Family Almanack."  
And Memory, with a mother's touch of love,  
Climbs with us to the dusky loft above,  
Where drowsily we trail our fingers in  
The mealy treasures of the harvest bin;  
And, feeling with our hands the open track,  
We pat the bag of barley on the back;  
And, groping onward through the mellow gloom,  
We catch the hidden apple's faint perfume,  
And, mingling with it, fragrant hints of pear  
And musky melon ripening somewhere.  
Again we stretch our limbs upon the bed  
Where first our simple childish prayers were said;  
And while, without, the gallant cricket trills  
A challenge to the solemn whippoorwills,  
And, filing on the chorus with his glee,  
The katydid whets all the harmony  
To feather-edge of incoherent song,  
We drop asleep, and peacefully along  
The current of our dreams we glide away  
To the dim harbor of another day,



Where brown toil waits for us, and where labor  
stands

To welcome us with rough and horny hands.

And who will mock the rude, unpolished ways  
That swayed us in the good old-fashioned days  
When labor wore the badge of manhood, set  
Upon his tawny brow in pearls of sweat?  
Who dares to-day to turn a scornful eye  
On labor in his swarthy majesty?  
Or wreath about his lips the sneer of pride  
Where brawny toil stands towering at his side?  
By industry alone we gauge the worth  
Of all the richer nations of the earth;  
And side by side with honesty and toil  
Prosperity walks round the furrowed soil  
That belts the world, and o'er the ocean ledge  
Tilts up the horn of plenty on its edge.  
'Tis not the subject fawning to the king,  
'Tis not the citizen, low cowering  
Before the throne of state.—'Twas God's intent  
Each man should be a king—a president;  
And while through human veins the blood of pride  
Shall ebb and flow in Labor's rolling tide,  
The brow of toil shall wear the diadem,  
And justice gleaming there, the central gem,  
Shall radiate the time when we shall see  
Each man rewarded as his works shall be.  
Thank God for this bright promise! Lift the voice  
Till all the waiting multitudes rejoice;

Reach out across the sea and clap your hands  
Till voices waken out of foreign lands  
To join the song, while listening Heaven waits  
To roll an answering anthem through the gates.

***F**OR the Song's sake; even so:  
Humor it, and let it go  
All untamed and wild of wing—  
Leave it ever truanting.*

*Be its flight elusive!—Lo,  
For the Song's sake—even so.—  
Yield it but an ear as kind  
As thou perkest to the wind.*

*Who will name us what the seas  
Have sung on for centuries?  
For the Song's sake! Even so—  
Sing, O Seas! and Breezes, blow!*

*Sing! or Wave or Wind or Bird—  
Sing! nor ever afterward  
Clear thy meaning to us—No!—  
For the Song's sake. Even so.*

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KRUNG	King— <i>of the</i> Spirks
CRESTILLOMEEM	
	<i>The Queen—Second Consort to</i> Krung
SPRAIVOLL	<i>The Tune-Fool</i>
AMPHINE	Prince— <i>Son of</i> Krung
DWAINIE	<i>A Princess—of the</i> Wunks
JUCKLET	<i>A Dwarf—of the</i> Spirks
CREECH <i>and</i>	
GRITCHFANG	Nightmares
	Counselors, Courtiers, Heralds, etc.

# THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

## ACT I

PLACE—THE FLYING ISLANDS

SCENE I. Spirkland. *Time, Moondawn. Interior Court of KRUNG. A vast, pendant star burns dimly in dome above throne. CRESTILLOMEEM discovered languidly reclining at foot of empty throne, an overturned goblet lying near, as though just drained. The Queen, in seeming dazed, ecstatic state, raptly gazing upward, listening. Swarming forms and features in air above, seen eerily coming and going, blending and intermingling in domed ceiling-spaces of court. Weird music. Mystic, luminous, beautiful faces detached from swarm, float singly forward,—tremulously, and in succession, poising in mid-air and chanting.*

### FIRST FACE

And who hath known her—like as I  
Have known her?—since the envying sky

Filched from her cheeks its morning hue,  
And from her eyes its glory, too,  
Of dazzling shine and diamond-dew.

## SECOND FACE

*I* knew her—long and long before  
High Æo loosed her palm and thought:  
“What awful splendor have I wrought  
To dazzle earth and Heaven, too!”

## THIRD FACE

*I* knew her—long ere Night was o’er—  
Ere Æo yet conjectured what  
To fashion Day of—ay, before  
He sprinkled stars across the floor  
Of dark, and swept that form of mine,  
E’en as a fleck of blinded shine,  
Back to the black where light was not.

## FOURTH FACE

Ere day was dreamt, *I* saw her face  
Lift from some starry hiding-place  
Where our old moon was kneeling while  
She lit its features with her smile.

## FIFTH FACE

*I* knew her while these islands yet  
Were nestlings—ere they feathered wing,



Or e'en could gape with them or get  
Apoise the laziest-ambling breeze,  
Or cheep, chirp out, or anything!  
When Time crooned rhymes of nurseries  
Above them—nodded, dozed and slept,  
And knew it not, till, wakening,  
The morning stars agreed to sing  
And Heaven's first tender dews were wept.

SIXTH FACE

I knew her when the jealous hands  
Of Angels set her sculptured form  
Upon a pedestal of storm  
And let her to this land with strands  
Of twisted lightnings.

SEVENTH FACE

And I heard  
Her voice ere she could tone a word  
Of any but the Seraph-tongue.—  
And O sad-sweeter than all sung-  
Or word-said things!—to hear her say,  
Between the tears she dashed away:—  
“Lo, launched from the offended sight  
Of Æo!—anguish infinite  
Is ours, O Sisterhood of Sin!  
Yet is thy service mine by right,  
And, sweet as I may rule it, thus

Shall Sin's myrrh-savor taste to us—  
 Sin's Empress—let my reign begin!"

# CHORUS OF SWARMING FACES

We follow thee forever on!  
 Through darkest night and dimmest dawn;  
 Through storm and calm—through shower and  
 shine,  
 Hear thou our voices answering thine:  
     We follow—*craving* but to be  
     Thy followers.—We follow thee—  
     We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on—  
 O'er hill and hollow, brake and lawn;  
 Through gruesome vale and dread ravine  
 Where light of day is never seen.—  
     We waver not in loyalty,—  
     Unfaltering we follow thee—  
     We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on!  
 The shroud of night around us drawn,  
 Though wet with mists, is wild-ashine  
 With stars to light that path of thine;—  
     The glowworms, too, befriend us—we  
     Shall fail not as we follow thee.  
     We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on.—  
The notchèd reeds we pipe upon  
Are pithed with music, keener blown  
And blither where thou ledest lone—  
    Glad pangs of its ecstatic glee  
    Shall reach thee as we follow thee.  
    We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on:  
We know the ways thy feet have gone,—  
The grass is greener, and the bloom  
Of roses richer in perfume—  
    And the birds of every blooming tree  
    Sing sweeter as we follow thee.  
    We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on;  
For wheresoever thou hast gone  
We hasten joyous, knowing there  
Is sweeter sin than elsewhere—  
    Leave still its latest cup, that we  
    May drain it as we follow thee.  
    We follow, follow, follow thee!

[Throughout final stanzas, faces in foreground and forms in background slowly vanish, and voices gradually fail to sheer silence.—CRESTILLO-MEEM rises and wistfully gazes and listens; then, evidently regaining wonted self, looks to be assured of being wholly alone—then speaks.]

## CRESTILLOMEEM

The Throne is throwing wide its gilded arms  
 To welcome me. The Throne of Krung! Ha! ha!  
 Leap up, ye lazy echoes, and laugh loud!  
 For I, Crestillomeem, the Queen—ha! ha!  
 Do fling my richest mirth into your mouths  
 That ye may fatten ripe with mockery!  
 I marvel what the kingdom would become  
 Were I not here to nurse it like a babe  
 And dandle it above the reach and clutch  
 Of intermeddlers in the royal line  
 And their attendant serfs. *Ho! Jucklet, ho!*  
 'Tis time my knarled warp of nice anatomy  
 Were here, to weave us on upon our mesh  
 Of silken villanies. *Ho! Jucklet, ho!*

*[Lifts secret door in pave and drops a star-bud  
 through opening. Enter JUCKLET from below.]*

## JUCKLET

*Spang sprit!* my gracious Queen! but thou hast  
 scorched  
 My left ear to a cinder! and my head  
 Rings like a ding-dong on the coast of death!  
 For, patient hate! thy hasty signal burst  
 Full in my face as hitherward I came!  
 But though my lug be fried to crisp, and my  
 Singed wig stinks like a little sun-stewed Wunk,  
 I stretch my fragrant presence at thy feet  
 And kiss thy sandal with a blistered lip.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Hold! rare-done fool, lest I may bid the cook  
To bake thee brown! How fares the King by this?

JUCKLET

Safe couched midmost his lordly hoard of books,  
I left him sleeping like a quinsied babe  
Next the guest-chamber of a poor man's house:  
But ere I came away, to rest mine ears,  
I salved his welded lids, uncorked his nose,  
And o'er the odorous blossom of his lips  
Re-squeezed the tintured sponge, and felt his pulse  
Come staggering back to regularity.  
And four hours hence his Highness will awake  
And *Peace* will take a nap!

CRESTILLOMEEM

*Ha!* What mean you?

JUCKLET [*Ominously*]

I mean that he suspects our knaveries.—  
Some covert spy is burrowed in the court—  
Nay, and I pray thee startle not *aloud*,  
But mute thy very heart in its out-throb,  
And let the blanching of thy cheeks but be  
A whispering sort of pallor!

CRESTILLOMEEM

A spy?—Here?

JUCKLET

Ay, *here*—and haply even *now*. And one  
 Whose unseen eye seems ever focused keen  
 Upon our action, and whose hungering ear  
 Eats every crumb of counsel that we drop  
 In these our secret interviews!—For he—  
 The King—through all his talking-sleep to-day  
 Hath jabbered of intrigue, conspiracy—  
 Of treachery and hate in fellowship,  
 With dire designs upon his royal bulk,  
 To oust it from the Throne.

CRESTILLOMEEM

He spake my name?

JUCKLET

O Queen, he speaks not ever but thy name  
 Makes melody of every sentence.—Yea,  
 He thinks thee even true to him as thou  
 Art fickle, false and subtle! O how blind  
 And lame, and deaf and dumb, and worn and weak,  
 And faint, and sick, and all-commodious  
 His dear love is! In sooth, O wifely one,  
 Thy malleable spouse doth mind me of



That pliant hero of the bald old catch  
"The Lovely Husband."—Shall I wreak the thing?

[*Sings—with much affected gravity and grimace*]

O a lovely husband he was known,  
He loved his wife and her a-lone;  
She reaped the harvest he had sown;  
She ate the meat; he picked the bone.  
    With mixed admirers every size,  
    She smiled on each without disguise;  
    This lovely husband closed his eyes  
    Lest he might take her by surprise.

[*Aside, exclamatory*]

Chorious uproarious!

[*Then pantomime as though pulling at bell-rope—  
singing in pent, explosive utterance*]

Trot!

Run!

Wasn't he a handy hubby?

What

Fun

She could plot and plan!

Not

One

Other such a dandy hubby

As this lovely man!

## CRESTILLOMEEM

Or talk or tune, wilt thou wind up thy tongue  
 Nor let it tangle in a knot of words!  
 What said the King?

JUCKLET [*With recovered reverence*]

He said: "Crestillomeem—  
 O that *she* knew this thick distress of mine!—  
 Her counsel would *anoint* me and her voice  
 Would flow in limpid wisdom o'er my woes  
 And, like a love-balm, lave my secret grief  
 And lull my sleepless heart!" [*Aside*] And so  
       went on,  
 Struggling all maudlin in the wrangled web  
 That well-nigh hath cocooned him!

## CRESTILLOMEEM

Did he yield  
 No hint of this mysterious distress  
 He needs must hold sequestered from his Queen?  
 What said he in his talking-sleep by which  
 Some clue were gained of how and when and  
       whence  
 His trouble came?

## JUCKLET

In one strange phase he spake  
 As though some sprited lady talked with him.—

Full courteously he said: "In woman's guise  
Thou comest, yet I think thou art, in sooth,  
But woman in thy form.—Thy words are strange  
And leave me mystified. I feel the truth  
Of all thou hast declared, and yet so vague  
And shadow-like thy meaning is to me,  
I know not how to act to ward the blow  
Thou sayest is hanging o'er me even now."  
And then, with open hands held pleadingly,  
He asked, "Who is my foe?"—And o'er his face  
A sudden pallor flashed, like death itself,  
As though, if answer had been given, it  
Had fallen like a curse.

CRESTILLOMEEM

I'll stake my soul  
Thrice over in the grinning teeth of doom,  
'Tis Dwainie of the Wunks who peeks and peers  
With those fine eyes of hers in our affairs  
And carries Krung, in some disguise, these hints  
Of our intent! See thou that silence falls  
Forever on her lips, and that the sight  
She wastes upon our secret action blurs  
With gray and grisly scum that shall for aye  
Conceal us from her gaze while she writhes blind  
And fangless as the fat worms of the grave!  
Here! take this tuft of downy druze, and when  
Thou comest on her, fronting full and fair,  
Say "*Sherzham!*" thrice, and fluff it in her face.

## JUCKLET

Thou knowest scanty magic, O my Queen,  
 But all thou dost is fairly excellent—  
 An *this* charm work, thou shalt have fuller faith  
 Than still I must withhold.

[*Takes charm, with extravagant salutation*]

## CRESTILLOMEEM

Thou gibing knave!  
 Thou thing! Dost dare to name my sorcery  
 As any trifling gift? Behold what might  
 Be thine an thy deserving wavered not  
 In stable and abiding service to  
 Thy Queen!

[*She presses suddenly her palm upon his eyes, then lifts her softly opening hand upward, his gaze following, where, slowly shaping in the air above them, appears semblance—or counter-self—of CRESTILLOMEEM, clothed in most radiant youth, her maiden-face bent downward to a moonlit sward, where kneels a lover-knight—flawless in manly symmetry and princely beauty,—yet none other than the counter-self of JUCKLET, eerily and with strange sweetness singing, to some curiously tinkling instrument, the praises of its queenly mistress: JUCKLET and CRESTILLOMEEM transfixed below—trancedly gazing on their mystic selves above.*]

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLET [Sings]

*Crestillomeem!*

*Crestillomeem!*

*Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!  
Moonlight may fall not as goldenly fair  
As falls the gold of thine opulent hair—  
Nay, nor the starlight as dazzlingly gleam  
As gleam thine eyes, 'Meema—Crestillomeem!—*

*Star of the skies, 'Meema—  
Crestillomeem!*

SEMBLANCE OF CRESTILLOMEEM [Sings]

*O Prince divine!*

*O Prince divine!*

*Tempt thou me not with that sweet voice of thine!  
Though my proud brow bear the blaze of a crown,  
Lo, at thy feet must its glory bow down,  
That from the dust thou mayest lift me to shine  
Heaven'd in thy heart's rapture, O Prince divine!—*

*Queen of thy love ever,  
O Prince divine!*

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLET [Sings]

*Crestillomeem!*

*Crestillomeem!*

*Our life shall flow as a musical stream—  
Windingly—placidly on it shall wend,*



*Marged with mazhoora-bloom banks without end—  
Word-birds shall call thee and dreamily scream,  
“Where dost thou cruise, ’Meema—Crestillomeem?  
Whither away, ’Meema?—  
Crestillomeem!”*

DUO

*[Vision and voices gradually failing away]*

*Crestillomeem!*

*Crestillomeem!*

*Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!  
Star of Love’s light, ’Meema—Crestillomeem!  
Crescent of Night, ’Meema!—  
Crestillomeem!*

*[With song, vision likewise fails utterly]*

CRESTILLOMEEM

*[To JUCKLET, still trancedly staring upward]*

How now, thou clabber-brainèd spudge!—  
Thou squelk!—thou—

JUCKLET

Nay, O Queen! contort me not  
To more condensèd littleness than now  
My shamèd frame incurreth on itself,

Seeing what might fare with it, didst *thou* will  
Kindly to nip it with thy magic *here*  
And leave it living in that form i' the air,  
Forever pranking o'er the daisied sward  
In wake of sandal-prints that dint the dews  
As lightly as, in thy late maidenhood,  
Thine own must needs have done in fighting from  
The dread encroachments of the King.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Nay—peace!

JUCKLET

So be it, O sweet Mystic.—But I crave  
One service of thy magic yet.—*Amphine!*—  
Breed me some special, damnèd philter for  
Amphine—the *fair* Amphine!—to chuck it him,  
Some serenade-tide, in a sodden slug  
O' pastry, 'twixt the door-crack and a screech  
O' rusty hinges.—Hey! Amphine, the *fair!*—  
And let me, too, elect his doom, O Queen!—  
Listed against thee, he, too, doubtless hath  
Been favored with an outline of our scheme.—  
And I would kick my soul all over hell  
If I might juggle his fine figure up  
In such a shape as mine!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Then this:—When thou  
Canst come upon him bent above a flower,

Or any blooming thing, and thou, arear,  
 Shalt reach it first and, thwartwise, touch it fair,  
 And with thy knuckle flick him on the knee,—  
*Then*—his fine form will shrink and shrivel up  
 As warty as a toad's—so hideous,  
 Thine own shall seem a marvel of rare grace!  
 Though idly speak'st thou of my mystic skill,  
 'Twas that which won the King for me;—'twas that  
 Bereft him of his daughter ere we had  
 Been wedded yet a haed:—She strangely went  
 Astray one moonset from the palace-steps—  
 She went—nor yet returned.—Was it not strange?—  
 She would be wedded to an alien prince  
 The morrow midnight—to a prince whose sire  
*I once knew*, in lost hours of lute and song,  
 When *he* was but a prince—*I* but a mouth  
 For him to lift up sippingly and drain  
 To lees most ultimate of stammering sobs  
 And maudlin wanderings of blinded breath.

JUCKLET [*Aside*]

*Twigg-brebblets!* but her Majesty hath speech  
 That doth bejuice all metaphor to drip  
 And spray and mist of sweetness!

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Confusedly*]

Where was I?  
 O, ay!—The princess went—she strangely went!—  
 E'en as I deemed her lover-princeling would

As strangely go, were she not soon restored.—  
 As so he did:—That airy penalty  
 The jocund Fates provide our love-lorn wights  
 In this glad island: So for thrice three nights  
 They spun the prince his line and marked him pay  
 It out (despite all warnings of his doom)  
 In fast and sleepless search for her—and *then*  
 They tripped his fumbling feet and he fell—UP!—  
 Up!—as 'tis writ—sheer past Heaven's flinching  
                     walls

And topmost cornices.—Up—up and on!—  
 And, it is grimly guessed of those who thus  
 For such a term bemoan an absent love,  
 And so fall *upwise*, they must needs fall on—  
 And on and on—and on—and on—and on!  
 Ha! ha!

### JUCKLET

*Quahh!* but the prince's holden breath  
 Must ache his throat by this! But, O my Queen,  
 What of the princess?—and—

### CRESTILLOMEEM

*The princess?—Ay—*  
 The princess! Ay, she went—she strangely went!  
 And when the dainty vagrant came not back—  
 Both sire and son in apprehensive throes  
 Of royal grief—the very Throne befogged  
 In sighs and tears!—when all hope waned at last,

And all the spies of Spirkland, in her quest,  
 Came straggling empty-handed home again,—  
 Why, then the wise King sleeved his rainy eyes  
 And sagely thought the pretty princess had  
 Strayed to the island's edge and tumbled off.  
 I could have set his mind at ease on that—  
 I could have told him,—*yea*, she tumbled off—  
*I tumbled her!*—and tumbled her so plump,  
 She tumbled in an under-island, then  
 Just slow-unmooring from our own and poised  
 For unknown voyagings of flight afar  
 And all remote of latitudes of ours.—  
 Ay, into that land I tumbled her from which  
 But one charm known to art can tumble her  
 Back into this,—and *that* charm (guilt be praised!)  
 Is lodged not in the wit nor the desire  
 Of my rare lore.

## JUCKLET

Thereinasmuch find joy!  
 But dost thou know that rumors flutter now  
 Among thy subjects of thy sorceries?—  
 The art being *banned*, thou knowest; or, unhoused,  
 Is unleashed pitilessly by the grim,  
 Facetious body of the dridular  
 Upon the one who fain had loosed the curse  
 On others.—An my counsel be worth aught,  
 Then have a care thy spells do not revert  
 Upon thyself, nor yet mine own poor hulk  
 O' fearsomeness!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Ha! ha! No vaguest need  
Of apprehension there!—While Krung remains—

*[She abruptly pauses—startled first, then listening curiously and with awed interest. Voice of exquisite melodiousness and fervor heard singing.]*

VOICE

When kings are kings, and kings are men—  
And the lonesome rain is raining!—  
O who shall rule from the red throne then,  
And who shall covet the scepter when—  
When the winds are all complaining?

When men are men, and men are kings—  
And the lonesome rain is raining!—  
O who shall list as the minstrel sings  
Of the crown's fiat, or the signet-ring's,  
When the winds are all complaining?

CRESTILLOMEEM

Whence flows such sweetness, and what voice is  
that?

JUCKLET

The voice of Spraivoll, an mine ears be whet  
And honéd o' late honeyéd memories



Behaunting the deserted purlieus of  
The court.

CRESTILLOMEEM

And who is Spraivoll, and what song  
Is that besung so blinding exquisite  
Of cadenced mystery?

JUCKLET

Spraivoll—O Queen,—  
Spraivoll The Tune-Fool is she fitly named  
By those who meet her ere the day long wanes  
And naught but janiteering sparsely frets  
The cushioned silences and stagnant dusts  
Indifferently resuscitated by  
The drowsy varlets in mock servitude  
Of so refurbishing the royal halls:  
She cometh, alien, from Wunkland—so  
Hath she deposed to divers questioners  
Who have been smitten of her voice—as rich  
In melody as she is poor in mind.  
She hath been roosting, pitied of the hinds  
And scullions, round about the palace here  
For half a node.

CRESTILLOMEEM

And pray, where is she perched—  
This wild-bird woman with her wondrous throat?

JUCKLET

Under some dingy cornice, like enough—  
 Though *wild-bird* she is not, being plumèd in,  
 Not feathers, but one fustianed stole—the like  
 Of which so shameth her fair face one needs  
 Must swear some lusty oaths, but that they shape  
 Themselves full gentlewise in mildest prayer:—  
 Not *wild-bird*;—nay, nor *woman*—though, in truth,  
 She ith a licensed idiot, and drifts  
 About, as restless and as useless, too,  
 As any lazy breeze in summer-time.  
 I'll call her forth to greet your Majesty.  
 Ho! Spraivoll! Ho! my twittering birdster, flit  
 Thou hither.

[Enter SPRAIVOLL—from behind group of statuary  
 —singing]

SPRAIVOLL

Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!  
 The moon spins round and round for me!  
 Wind it up with a golden key.  
 Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Who art thou, and what the strange  
 Elusive beauty and intent of thy

Sweet song? What singest thou, vague, mystic-  
bird—

What doth The Tune-Fool sing? Ay, sing me what.

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

What sings the breene on the wertling-vine,  
And the tweck on the bamner-stem?  
Their song, to me, is the same as mine,  
As mine is the same to them—to them—  
As mine is the same to them.

In star-starved glooms where the plustre looms  
With its slender boughs above,  
Their song sprays down with the fragrant  
blooms,—  
And the song they sing is love—is love—  
And the song they sing is love.

JUCKLET

Your Majesty may be surprised somewhat,  
But Spraivoll can not talk,—her only mode  
Of speech is melody; and thou might'st put  
The dowered fool a thousand queries, and,  
In like return, receive a thousand songs,  
All set to differing tunes—as full of naught  
As space is full of emptiness.

CRESTILLOMEEM

A fool?—  
And with a gift so all-divine!—A fool?

JUCKLET

Ay, warranted!—The Flying Islands all  
Might flock in mighty counsel—molt, and shake  
Their loosened feathers, and sort every tuft,  
Nor ever most minutely quarry there  
One other Spraivoll, itching with her voice  
Such favored spot of cuticle as she  
Alone selects here in our blissful realm.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Out, jester, on thy cumbrous wordiness!  
Come hither, Tune-Fool, and be not afraid,  
For I like fools so well I married one:  
And since thou art a *Queen* of fools, and he  
A *King*, why, I've a mind to bring ye two  
Together in some wise. Canst use thy song  
All times in such entrancing spirit one  
Who lists must so needs list, e'en though the song  
Go on unceasingly indefinite?

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

If one should ask me for a song,  
Then I should answer, and my tongue  
Would twitter, trill and troll along  
Until the song were done.

Or should one ask me for my tongue,  
And I should answer with a song,  
I'd trill it till the song were sung,  
And troll it all along.

## CRESTILLOMEEM

Thou art indeed a fool, and one, I think,  
 To serve my present purposes. Give ear.—  
 And Jucklet, thou, go to the King and bide  
 His waking: then repeat these words:—“*The Queen*  
*Impatiently awaits his Majesty,*  
*And craves his presence in the Tower of Stars,*  
*That she may there express full tenderly*  
*Her great solicitude.”* And then, end thus,—  
 “*So much she bade, and drooped her glowing face*  
*Deep in the showerings of her golden hair,*  
*And with a flashing gesture of her arm*  
*Turned all the moonlight pallid, saying ‘Haste!’”*

## JUCKLET

And would it not be well to hang a pearl  
 Or twain upon thy silken lashes?

## CRESTILLOMEEM

Go!

JUCKLET [*Exit, singing*]

This lovely husband's loyal breast  
 Heaved only as she might suggest,—  
 To every whimsy she expressed  
 He proudly bowed and acquiesced.  
 He plotted with her, blithe and gay—  
 In no flirtation said her nay,—

He even took her to the play,  
Excused himself and came away.

CRESTILLOMEEM [*To Spraivoll*]

Now, Tune-Fool, *junior*, let me theme *thee* for  
A song:—An Empress once, with angel in  
Her face and devil in her heart, had wish  
To breed confusion to her sovereign lord,  
And work the downfall of his haughty son—  
The issue of a former marriage—who  
Bellowsed her hatred to the whitest heat,  
For that her own son, by a former lord,  
Was born a hideous dwarf, and reared aside  
From the sire's knowing or his princely own—  
That *none*, in sooth, might ever chance to guess  
The hapless mother of the hapless child.  
The Fiends that scar her thus, protect her still  
With outward beauty of both face and form.—  
It so is written, and so must remain  
Till magic greater than their own is found  
To hurl against her. So is she secure  
And proof above all fear. Now, listen well!—  
Her present lord is haunted with a dream,  
That he is soon to pass, and so prepares  
(*All havoc hath been wrangled with the drugs!*)  
The Throne for the ascension of the son,  
His cursèd heir, who still doth baffle all  
Her arts against him, e'en as though he were  
Protected by a skill beyond her own.



Soh! she, the Queen, doth rule the King in all  
 Save this affectionate perversity  
 Of favor for the son whom he would raise  
 To his own place.—And but for this the King  
 Long since had tasted death and kissed his fate  
 As one might kiss a bride! But so his Queen  
 Must needs withhold, not deal, the final blow,  
 She yet doth bind him, spelled, still trusting her;  
 And, by her craft and wanton flatteries,  
 Doth sway his love to every purpose but  
 The one most coveted.—And for this end  
 She would make use of thee;—and if thou dost  
 Her will, as her good pleasure shall direct,  
 Why, thou shalt sing at court, in silken tire,  
 Thy brow bound with wild diamonds, and thy hair  
 Sown with such gems as laugh hysteric lights  
 From glittering quespar, guenk and plennocynth,—  
 Ay, even panoplied as might the fair  
 Form of a very princess be, thy voice  
 Shall woo the echoes of the listening Throne.

SPRAIVOLL [*Crooning abstractedly*]

And O shall one—high brother of the air,  
 In deeps of space—shall he have dream as fair?—  
 And shall that dream be this?—In some strange  
     place  
 Of long-lost lands he finds her waiting face—  
 Comes marveling upon it, unaware,  
 Set moonwise in the midnight of her hair,

And is behaunted with old nights of May,  
 So his glad lips do purl a roundelay  
 Purloinèd from the echo-triller's beak,  
 Seen keenly notching at some star's blanch cheek  
 With its ecstatic twitterings, through dusk  
 And sheen of dewy boughs of bloom and musk.  
 For him, Love, light again the eyes of her  
 That show nor tears nor laughter nor surprise—  
 For him undim their glamour and the blur  
 Of dreams drawn from the depths of deepest skies.  
 He doth not know if any lily blows  
 As fair of feature, nor of any rose.

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Aside*]

O this weird woman! she doth drug mine ears  
 With her uncanny sumptuousness of song!  
 [*To Spraiuvoll*] Nay, nay! Give o'er thy tuneful  
     maunderings  
 And mark me further, Tune-Fool—ay, and well:—  
 At present doth the King lie in a sleep  
 Drug-wrought and deep as death—the after-phase  
 Of an unconscious state, in which each act  
 Of his throughout his waking hours is so  
 Rehearsed, in manner, motion, deed and word,  
 Her spies (the Queen's) that watch him, serving  
     there  
 As guardians o'er his royal slumbers, may  
 Inform her of her lord's most secret thought.  
 And lo, her plans have ripened even now  
 Till, *should he come upon this Throne to-night,*

Where eagerly his counselors will bide  
 His coming,—she, the Queen, hath reason to  
 Suspect her long-designed purposes  
 May fall in jeopardy;—but if he *fail*,  
 Through *any* means, to lend his presence there,—  
*Then*, by a wheedled mandate, *is his Queen*  
*Empowered with all Sovereignty to reign*  
*And work the royal purposes instead.*  
 Therefore, the Queen hath set an interview—  
 A conference to be holden with the King,  
 Which is ordained to fall on noon to-night,  
 Twelve star-twirls ere the nick the Throne con-  
 venes.—

And with her thou shalt go, and bide in wait  
 Until she signal thee to sing; and then  
 Shalt thou so work upon his mellow mood  
 With that un-Spirkly magic of thy voice—  
 So all bedaze his waking thought with dreams,—  
 The Queen may, all unnoticed, slip away,  
 And leave thee singing to a throneless King.

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

And who shall sing for the haughty son  
 While the good King droops his head?—  
 And will he dream, when the song is done,  
 That a princess fair lies dead?

CRESTILLOMEEM

The haughty son hath found *his* “Song”—*sweet*  
*curse!*—

And may she sing his everlasting dirge!  
 She comes from that near-floating land of thine,  
 Naming herself a princess of that realm  
 So strangely peopled we would fain evade  
 All murgence, and remain as strange to them  
 As they to us. No less this Dwainie hath  
 Most sinuously writhed and lithed her way  
 Into court favor here—hath glidden past  
 The King's encharmèd sight and sleeked herself  
 Within the very altars of his house—  
 His line—his blood—his very life:—*AMPHINE!*  
 Not any Spirkland gentlemaiden might  
 Aspire so high as *she* hath dared to dare!—  
 For she, with her fair skin and finer ways,  
 And beauty second only to the Queen's,  
 Hath caught the Prince betwixt her mellow palms  
 And stroked him flutterless. Didst ever thou  
 In thy land hear of *Dwainie of the Wunks?*

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

Ay, Dwainie!—My Dwainie!  
     The lurloo ever sings,  
 A tremor in his flossy crest  
     And in his glossy wings.  
 And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!  
     The winno-welvers call;—  
 But Dwainie hides in Spirkland  
     And answers not at all.

The teeper twitters Dwainie!—  
     The tcheucker on his spray

Teeters up and down the wind  
 And will not fly away:  
 And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!  
 The drowsy oovers draw!;—  
 But Dwainie hides in Spirkland  
 And answers not at all.

O Dwainie!—My Dwainie!  
 The breezes hold their breath—  
 The stars are pale as blossoms,  
 And the night as still as death:  
 And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!  
 The fainting echoes fall;—  
 But Dwainie hides in Spirkland  
 And answers not at all.

## CRESTILLOMEEM

A melody ecstatic! and—thy words,  
 Although so meaningless, seem something more—  
 A vague and shadowy something, eerie-like,  
 That maketh one to shiver over-chilled  
 With curious, creeping sweetnesses of pain  
 And catching breaths that flutter tremulous  
 With sighs that dry the throat out icily.—  
 But save thy music! Come! that I may make  
 Thee ready for thy royal auditor. [*Exeunt*]

END ACT I

## ACT II

SCENE I. *A garden of KRUNG'S Palace, screened from the moon with netted glenk-vines and blooming zhoomer-boughs, all glimmeringly lighted with star-flakes. An arbor, near which is a table spread with a repast—two seats, drawn either side. A playing fountain, at marge of which AMPHINE sits thrumming a trentoraine.*

AMPHINE [*Improvising*]

Ah, help me! but her face and brow  
Are lovelier than lilies are  
Beneath the light of moon and star  
That smile as they are smiling now—  
White lilies in a pallid swoon  
Of sweetest white beneath the moon—  
White lilies in a flood of bright  
Pure lucidness of liquid light  
Cascading down some plenilune  
When all the azure overhead

Blooms like a dazzling daisy-bed.—  
 So luminous her face and brow,  
 The luster of their glory, shed  
 In memory, even, blinds me now.

[*Plaintively addressing instrument*]

O warbling strand of silver, where, O where  
 Hast thou unraveled that sweet voice of thine  
 And left its silken murmurs quavering  
 In limp thrills of delight? O golden wire,  
 Where hast thou spilled thy precious twink-  
     ings?—

What thirsty ear hath drained thy melody,  
 And left me but a wild, delirious drop  
 To tincture all my soul with vain desire?

[*Improvising*]

Her face—her brow—her hair unfurled!—  
 And O the oval chin below,  
 Carved, like a cunning cameo,  
 With one exquisite dimple, swirled  
 With swimming shine and shade, and whirled  
 The daintiest vortex poets know—  
 The sweetest whirlpool ever twirled  
 By Cupid's finger-tip,—and so,  
 The deadliest maelstrom in the world.

[*Pauses—Enter unperceived, DWAINIE, behind, in  
     upper bower*]



AMPHINE [*Again addressing instrument*]

O Trentoraine! how like an emptièd vase  
Thou art—whose clustering blooms of song have  
    drooped  
And faded, one by one, and fallen away  
And left to me but dry and tuneless stems  
And crisp and withered tendrils of a voice  
Whose thrilling tone, now like a throttled sound,  
Lies stifled, faint, and gasping all in vain  
For utterance.

[*Again improvising*]

And O mad wars of blinding blurs  
And flashings of lance-blades of light,  
Whet glitteringly athwart the sight  
That dares confront those eyes of hers!  
Let any dewdrop soak the hue  
Of any violet through and through,  
And then be colorless and dull,  
Compared with eyes so beautiful!  
I swear ye that her eyes be bright  
As noonday, yet as dark as night—  
As bright as be the burnished bars  
Of rainbows set in sunny skies,  
And yet as deep and dark, her eyes,  
And lustrous black as blown-out stars.

[*Pauses — DWAINIE still unperceived, radiantly  
smiling and wafting kisses down from trellis-  
window above*]

AMPHINE [*Again to instrument*]

O empty husk of song!  
 If deep within my heart the music thou  
 Hast stored away might find an issuance,  
 A fount of limpid laughter would leap up  
 And gurgle from my lips, and all the winds  
 Would revel with it, riotous with joy;  
 And Dwainie, in her beauty, would lean o'er  
 The battlements of night, and, like the moon,  
 The glory of her face would light the world—  
 For I would sing of love.

DWAINIE

And she would hear,—  
 And, reaching overhead among the stars,  
 Would scatter them like daisies at thy feet.

AMPHINE

O voice, where art thou floating on the air?—  
 O Seraph-soul, where art thou hovering?

DWAINIE

I hover in the zephyr of thy sighs,  
 And tremble lest thy love for me shall fail  
 To buoy me thus forever on the breath  
 Of such a dream as Heaven envies.

AMPHINE

Ah!

[*Turning, discovers DWAINIE—she still feigning invisibility, while he, with lifted eyes and wistful gaze, preludes with instrument—then sings.*]

Linger, my Dwainie! Dwainie, lily-fair,  
Stay yet thy step upon the casement-stair—  
Poised be, thy slipper-tip as is the tine  
Of some still star.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,  
Yet linger—linger there!

Thy face, O Dwainie, lily-pure and fair,  
Gleams i' the dusk, as in thy dusky hair  
The moony zhoomer glimmers, or the shine  
Of thy swift smile.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,  
Yet linger—linger there!

With lifted wrist, whereround the laughing air  
Hath blown a mist of lawn and clasped it there,  
Waft finger-thipt adieus that spray the wine  
Of thy waste kisses toward me, Dwainie mine—  
Yet linger—linger there!

What unloosed splendor is there may compare  
With thy hand's unfurled glory, anywhere?  
What glint of dazzling dew or jewel fine

May mate thine eyes?—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie  
mine!

Yet linger—linger there!

My soul confronts thee: On thy brow and hair  
It lays its tenderness like palms of prayer—  
It touches sacredly those lips of thine  
And swoons across thy spirit, Dwainie mine,  
The while thou lingerest there.

[*Drops trentoraine, and, with open arms, gazes  
yearningly on DWAINIE*]

DWAINIE [*Raptly*]

Thy words do wing my being dovewise!

AMPHINE

Then,  
Thou lovest!—O my homing dove, veer down  
And nestle in the warm home of my breast!  
So empty are mine arms, so full my heart,  
The one must hold thee, or the other burst.

DWAINIE [*Throwing herself in his embrace*]

Æo's own hand methinks hath flung me here:  
O hold me that He may not pluck me back!

AMPHINE

So closely will I hold thee that not e'en  
The hand of death shall separate us.

DWAINIE

So

May sweet death find us, then, that, woven thus  
In the corolla of a ripe caress,  
We may drop lightly, like twin plustre-buds,  
On Heaven's star-strewn lawn.

AMPHINE

So do I pray.

But tell me, tender heart, an thou dost love,  
Where hast thou loitered for so long?—for thou  
Didst promise tryst here with me earlier by  
Some several layodemes which I have told  
Full chafingly against my finger-tips  
Till the full complement, save three, are ranged  
Thy pitiless accusers, claiming, each,  
So many as their joinèd number be  
Shalt thou so many times lift up thy lips  
For mine's most lingering forgiveness.  
So, save thee, O my Sweet! and rest thee, I  
Have ordered merl and viands to be brought  
For our refreshment here, where, thus alone,  
I may sip words with thee as well as wine.  
Why hast thou kept me so athirst?—Why, I  
Am jealous of the flattered solitudes  
In which thou walkest. [They sit at table]

DWAINIE

Nay, I will not tell,  
Since, an I yielded, countless questions, like

In idlest worth, would waste our interview  
 In speculations vain.—Let this suffice:—  
 I stayed to talk with one whom, long ago,  
 I met and knew, and grew to love, forsooth,  
 In dreamy Wunkland.—Talked of mellow nights,  
 And long, long hours of golden olden times  
 When girlish happiness locked hands with me  
 And we went spinning round, with naked feet  
 In swaths of bruised roses ankle-deep;  
 When laughter rang unsilenced, unrebuked,  
 And prayers went unremembered, oozing clean  
 From the drowsed memory, as from the eyes  
 The pure, sweet mother-face that bent above  
 Glimmered and wavered, blurred, bent closer still  
 A timeless instant, like a shadowy flame,  
 Then flickered tremulously o'er the brow  
 And went out in a kiss.

AMPHINE [*Kissing her*]

Not like to *this*!  
 O blessed lips whose kiss alone may be  
 Sweeter than their sweet speech! Speak on, and say  
 Of what else talked thou and thy friend?

DWAINIE

We talked  
 Of all the past, ah me! and all the friends  
 That now await my coming. And we talked  
 Of O so many things—so many things—  
 That I but blend them all with dreams of when,

With thy warm hand clasped close in this of mine,  
We cross the floating bridge that soon again  
Will span the all-unfathomable gulfs  
Of nether air betwixt this isle of strife  
And my most glorious realm of changeless peace,  
Where summer night reigns ever and the moon  
Hangs ever ripe and lush with radiance  
Above a land where roses float on wings  
And fan their fragrance out so lavishly  
That Heaven hath hint of it, and oft therefrom  
Sends down to us across the odorous seas  
Strange argosies of interchanging bud  
And blossom, spice and balm.—Sweet—sweet  
Beyond all art and wit of uttering.

AMPHINE

O Empress of my listening Soul, speak on,  
And tell me all of that rare land of thine!—  
For even though I reigned a peerless king  
Within mine own, methinks I could fling down  
My scepter, signet, crown and royal might,  
And so fare down the thornèd path of life  
If at its dwindling end my feet might touch  
Upon the shores of such a land as thou  
Dost paint for me—*thy* realm! Tell on of it—  
And tell me if thy sister-woman there  
Is like to thee—Yet nay! for an thou didst,  
These eyes would lose all speech of sight  
And call not back to thine their utter love.  
But tell me of thy brothers.—Are they great,



And can they grapple Æo's arguments  
 Beyond our skill? or wrest a purpose from  
 The pink side of the moon at Darsten-tide?  
 Or cipher out the problem of blind stars,  
 That ever still do safely grope their way  
 Among the thronging constellations?

## DWAINIE

Ay!

Ay, they have leaped all earthland barriers  
 In mine own isle of wisdom-working Wunks:—  
 'Twas Wunkland's son that voyaged round the  
 moon

And moored his bark within the molten bays  
 Of bubbling silver: And 'twas Wunkland's son  
 That talked with Mars—unbuckled Saturn's belt  
 And tightened it in squeeze of such facts  
 Therefrom as even *he* dare not disclose  
 In full till all his followers, as himself,  
 Have grown them wings, and gat them beaks and  
 claws,

With plumage all bescienced to withstand  
 All tensest flames—glaze-throated, too, and lung'd  
 To swallow fiercest-spurred jets and cores  
 Of embered and unquenchable white heat:  
 'Twas Wunkland's son that alchemized the dewes  
 And bred all colored grasses that he wist—  
 Divorced the airs and mists and caught the trick  
 Of azure-tinting earth as well as sky:

'Twas Wunkland's son that bent the rainbow  
straight

And walked it like a street, and so returned  
To tell us it was made of hammered shine,  
Inlaid with strips of selvage from the sun  
And burnished with the rust of rotten stars:  
'Twas Wunkland's son that comprehended first  
All grosser things, and took our worlds apart  
And oiled their works with theories that clicked  
In glib articulation with the pulse  
And palpitation of the systemed facts.—  
And, circling ever round the farthest reach  
Of the remotest welkin of all truths,  
We stint not our investigations to  
*Our* worlds only, but query still beyond.—  
For now our goolores say, below these isles  
A million million miles, are *other* worlds—  
Not like to ours, but *round*, as bubbles are,  
And, like them, ever reeling on through space,  
And anchorless through all eternity;—  
Not like to ours, for our isles, as they note,  
Are living things that fly about at night,  
And soar above and cling, throughout the day,  
Like bats, beneath the bent sills of the skies:  
And I myself have heard, at dawn of moon,  
A liquid music filtered through my dreams,  
As though 'twere myriads of sweet voices, pent  
In some o'erhanging realm, had spilled themselves  
In streams of melody that trickled through  
The chinks and crannies of a crystal pave,

Until the wasted juice of harmony,  
 Slow-leaking o'er my senses, laved my soul  
 In ecstasy divine: And afferhaiks,  
 Who scour our coasts on missions for the King,  
 Declare our island's shape is like the zhibb's  
 When lolling in a trance upon the air  
 With open wings uplant and motionless.  
 O such a land it is—so all complete  
 In all wise inhabitants, and knowledge, lore,  
 Arts, sciences, perfected government  
 And kingly wisdom, worth and majesty—  
 And *Art*—ineffably above all else:—  
 The art of the *Romancer*,—fabulous  
 Beyond the miracles of strangest fact;  
 The art of *Poesy*,—the sanest soul  
 Is made mad with its uttering; the art  
 Of *Music*,—words may not e'en whimper what  
 The jewel-sounds of song yield to the sense;  
 And, last,—the art of *Knowing what to Know*,  
 And how to zoon straight toward it like a bee,  
 Draining or song or poem as it brims  
 And overruns with raciest spirit-dew.—  
 And, *after*,—chaos all to sense like thine,  
 Till there, translated, thou shalt know as I. . . .  
 So furnished forth in all things lovable  
 Is my Land-Wondrous—ay, and thine to be,—  
 O Amphine, love of mine, it lacks but thy  
 Sweet presence to make it a paradise!

[*Takes up trentoraine*]

And shall I tell thee of the home that waits  
For thy glad coming, Amphine?—Listen, then!

CHANT-RECITATIVE

A palace veiled in a glimmering dusk;  
Warm breaths of a tropic air,  
Drugged with the odorous marzhoo's musk  
And the sumptuous cyncotwaire—  
Where the trembling hands of the lilwing's leaves  
The winds caress and fawn,  
While the dreamy starlight idly weaves  
Designs for the damask lawn.

Densed in the depths of a dim eclipse  
Of palms, in a flowery space,  
A fountain leaps from the marble lips  
Of a girl, with a golden vase  
Held atip on a curving wrist,  
Drinking the drops that glance  
Laughingly in the glittering mist  
Of her crystal utterance.

Archways looped o'er blooming walks  
That lead through gleaming halls;  
And balconies where the word-bird talks  
To the tittering waterfalls:  
And casements, gauzed with the filmy sheen  
Of a lace that sifts the sight  
Through a ghost of bloom on the haunted screen  
That drips with the dew's of light.

Weird, pale shapes of sculptured stone,—  
 With marble nymphs agaze  
 Ever in fonts of amber, sown  
 With seeds of gold and sprays  
 Of emerald mosses, ever drowned,  
 Where glimpses of shell and gem  
 Peer from the depths, as round and round  
 The nautilus nods at them.

Faces blurred in a mazy dance,  
 With a music, wild and sweet,  
 Spinning the threads of the mad romance  
 That tangles the waltzers' feet:  
 Twining arms, and warm, swift thrills  
 That pulse to the melody,  
 Till the soul of the dancer dips and fills  
 In the wells of ecstasy.

Eyes that melt in a quivering ore  
 Of love, and the molten kiss  
 Jetted forth of the hearts that pour  
 Their blood in the molds of bliss.—  
 Till, worn to a languor slumber-deep,  
 The soul of the dreamer lifts  
 A silken sail on the gulfs of sleep,  
 And into the darkness drifts.

[*The instrument falls from her hand—AMPHINE, in stress of passionate delight, embraces her.*]

AMPHINE

Thou art not all of earth, O angel one!  
Nor do I far miswonder me an thou  
Hast peered above the very walls of Heaven!  
What hast thou seen there?—Didst on Æo bask  
Thine eyes and clothe Him with new splendorings?  
And strove He to fling back as bright a smile  
As thine, the while He beckoned thee within?  
And, tell me, didst thou meet an angel there  
A-linger at the gates, nor entering  
Till I, her brother, joined her?

DWAINIE

Why, hast thou  
A sister dead?—Truth, I have heard of one  
Long lost to thee—not dead?

AMPHINE

Of her I speak,—  
And dead, although we know not certainly,  
We moan us ever it must needs be death  
Only could hold her from us such long term  
Of changeless yearning for her glad return.  
She strayed away from us long, long ago.—  
O and our memories!—Her wondering eyes  
That seemed as though they ever looked on things  
We might not see—as haply so they did,—

For she went from us, all so suddenly—  
 So strangely vanished, leaving never trace  
 Of her outgoing, that I oftentimes think  
 Her rapt eyes fell along some certain path  
 Of special glory paven for her feet,  
 And fashioned of Æo's supreme desire  
 That she might bend her steps therein and so  
 Reach Him again, unseen of our mere eyes.  
 My sweet, sweet sister!—lost to brother—sire—  
 And, to *her* heart, one dearer than all else,—  
 Her *lover*—lost indeed!

#### DWAINIE

Nay, do not grieve  
 Thee thus, O loving heart! Thy sister yet  
 May come to thee in some glad way the Fates  
 Are fashioning the while thy tear-drops fall!  
 So calm thee, while I speak of thine own self.—  
 For I have listened to a whistling bird  
 That pipes of waiting danger. Didst thou note  
 No strange behavior of thy sire of late?

#### AMPHINE

Ay, he is silent, and he walks as one  
 In some fixed melancholy, or as one  
 Half waking.—Even his worshiped books seem  
     now  
 But things on shelves,



DWAINIE

And doth he counsel not  
With thee in any wise pertaining to  
His ailings, or of matters looking toward  
His future purposes or his intents  
Regarding thine own future fortunings  
And his desires and interests therein?  
What bearing hath he shown of late toward thee  
By which thou might'st beframe some estimate  
Of his mind's placid flow or turbulent?  
And hath he not so spoken thee at times  
Thou hast been 'wildered of his words, or grieved  
Of his strange manner?

AMPHINE

Once he stayed me on  
The palace-stair and whispered, "Lo, my son,  
Thy young reign draweth nigh—prepare!"—So  
passed  
And vanished as a wraith, so wan he was!

DWAINIE

And didst thou ever reason on this thing,  
Nor ask thyself what dims thy father's eye  
And makes a brooding shadow of his form?

AMPHINE

Why, there's a household rumor that he dreams  
Death fareth ever at his side, and soon

Shall signal him away.—But *Jucklet* saith  
*Crestillomeem* hath said *the leeches* say  
 There is no cause for serious concern;  
 And thus am I assured 'tis nothing more  
 Than childish fancy of mine aging sire,—  
 And so, as now, I laugh, full reverently,  
 And marvel, as I mark his shuffling gait,  
 And his bestrangered air and murmurous lips,  
 As by he glideth to and fro, ha! ha!  
 Ho! ho!—I laugh me many, many times—  
 Mind, thou, 'tis *reverently* I laugh—ha! ha!—  
 And wonder, as he glideth ghostly-wise,  
 If ever I shall waver as I walk,  
 And stumble o'er my beard, and knit my brows,  
 And o'er the dull mosaics of the pave  
 Play chequers with mine eyes! Ha! ha!

DWAINIE [*Aside*]

How dare—

How dare I tell him? Yet I must—I must!

AMPHINE

Why, art *thou*, too, grown childish, that thou canst  
 Find thee waste pleasure talking to thyself  
 And staring frowningly with eyes whose smiles  
 I need so much?

DWAINIE

Nay, rather say, their tears,  
 Poor thoughtless Prince! [*Aside*] (My magic  
 even now

Forecasts his kingly sire's near happening  
Of nameless hurt and ache and awful stress  
Of agony supreme, when he shall stare  
The stark truth in the face!)

AMPHINE

What meanest thou?

DWAINIE

What mean I but thy welfare? Why, I mean,  
One hour ago, the Queen, thy mother—

AMPHINE

Nay,

Say only "Queen"!

DWAINIE

—The Queen, one hour ago—

As so I learned from source I need not say—  
Sent message craving audience with the King  
At noon to-night, within the Tower of Stars.—  
Thou knowest, only brief space following  
The time of her pent session therseso set  
In secret with the King alone, *the Throne*  
Is set, too, to convene; and that *the King*  
*Hath lent his seal unto a mandate that,*  
*Should he withhold his presence there, the Queen*  
*Shall be empowered to preside—to reign—*

*Solely endowed to work the royal will  
 In lieu of the good King.* Now, therefore, I  
 Have been advised that she, the Queen, by craft  
 Connives to hold him absent purposely,  
 That she may claim the vacancy—for what  
 Covert design I know not, but I know  
 It augurs peril to you both, as to  
 The Throne's own perpetuity. [*Aside*] (Again  
 My magic gives me vision terrible:—  
 The Sorceress' legions balk mine own.—The King  
 Still hers, yet wavering. O save the King,  
 Thou Æo!—Render him to us!)

## AMPHINE

I feel  
 Thou speakest truth: and yet how know'st thou  
 this?

## DWAINIE

Ask me not that; my lips are welded close.—  
 And, *more*,—since I have dared to speak, and thou  
 To listen,—Jucklet is accessory,  
 And even now is plotting for thy fall.  
 But, Passion of my Soul! think not of me,—  
 For nothing but sheer magic may avail  
 To work me harm;—but look thou to thyself!  
 For thou art blameless cause of all the hate  
 That rankleth in the bosom of the Queen.  
*So have thine eyes unslumbered ever, that  
 No step may steal behind thee—for in this*

*Unlooked-of way thine enemy will come:*  
 This much I know, but for what fell intent  
 Dare not surmise.—*So look thou, night and day,*  
*That none may skulk upon thee in this wise*  
*Of dastardly attack.* [Aside] (Ha! Sorceress!  
 Thou palest, tossing wild and wantonly  
 The smothering golden tempest of thy hair.—  
 What! lying eyes! ye dare to utter *tears?*  
*Help! help! Yield us the King!*)

AMPHINE

And thou, O sweet!  
 How art thou guarded and what shield is thine  
 Of safety?

DWAINIE

Fear not thou for me at all.—  
 Possessed am I of wondrous sorcery—  
 The gift of Holy Magi at my birth:—  
 Mine enemy must *front* me in assault  
 And must with mummary of speech assail,  
 And I will know him in first utterance—  
 And so may thus disarm him, though he be  
 A giant thrice in vasty form and force.

[*Singing heard*]

But, list! what wandering minstrel cometh here  
 In the young night?

VOICE [*In distance—singing*]

*The drowsy eyes of the stars grow dim;  
 The wamboo roosts on the rainbow's rim,  
 And the moon is a ghost of shine:  
 The soothing song of the crule is done,  
 But the song of love is a soother one,  
 And the song of love is mine.  
 Then, wake! O wake!  
 For the sweet song's sake,  
 Nor let my heart  
 With the morning break!*

## AMPHINE

Some serenader! Hist!  
 What meaneth he so early, and what thus  
 Within the palace garden-close? Quick; here!  
 He neareth! Soh! Let us conceal ourselves  
 And mark his action, wholly unobserved.

[AMPHINE and DWAINIE enter bower]

VOICE [Drawing nearer]

*The mist of the morning, chill and gray,  
 Wraps the night in a shroud of spray;  
 The sun is a crimson blot:  
 The moon fades fast, and the stars take wing;  
 The comet's tail is a fleeting thing—  
 But the tale of love is not.*

*Then, wake! O wake!  
For the sweet song's sake,  
Nor let my heart  
With the morning break!*

[Enter JUCKLET]

JUCKLET

*Eex!* what a sumptuous darkness is the Night—  
How rich and deep and suave and velvety  
Its lovely blackness to a soul like mine!  
Ah, Night! thou densest of all mysteries—  
Thou eeriest of unfathomable delights,  
Whose soundless sheer inscrutability  
Is fascination's own ethereal self,  
Unseen, and yet embodied—palpable,—  
An essence, yet a form of stableness  
That stays me—weighs me, as a giant palm  
Were laid on either shoulder.—Peace! I cease  
Even to strive to grope one further pace,  
But stand uncovered and with lifted face.  
O but a glamour of inward light  
Hath smitten the eyes of my soul to-night!  
Groping here in the garden-land,  
I feel my fancy's outheld hand  
Touch the rim of a realm that seems  
Like an isle of bloom in a sea of dreams:  
I stand mazed, dazed and alone—alone!—  
My heart beats on in an undertone,  
And I lean and listen long, and long,



And I hold my breath as I hear again  
 The chords of a long-dead trentoraine  
 And the wraith of an old love-song.  
 Low to myself am I whispering:—  
     *Glad am I, and the Night knows why—*  
     *Glad am I that the dream came by*  
     *And found me here as of old when I*  
     *Was a ruler and a king.*

DWAINIE [To Amphine]

What gentle little monster is this dwarf—  
 Surely not Jucklet of the court?

AMPHINE [Ironically]

Ay, ay!

But he'll *ungentle* an thy woman's-heart  
 Yield him but space. Listen: he mouths again.

JUCKLET

It was an age ago—an age  
 Turned down in life like a folded page.—  
 See where the volume falls apart,  
 And the faded book-mark—'tis my heart,—  
 Nor mine alone, but another knit  
 So cunningly in the love of it  
 That you must look, with a shaking head,  
 Nor know the quick one from the dead.  
 Ah! what a broad and sea-like lawn

Is the field of love they bloom upon!—

Waves of its violet-velvet grass

Billowing, with the winds that pass,

And breaking in a snow-white foam

Of lily-crests on the shores of home.

Low to myself am I whispering:—

*Glad am I, and the Night knows why—*

*Glad am I that the dream came by*

*And found me here as of old when I*

*Was a ruler and a king.*

[*Abruptly breaking into impassioned vocal burst*]

SONG

Fold me away in your arms, O Night—

Night, my Night, with your rich black  
hair!—

Tumble it down till my yearning sight

And my unkissed lips are hidden quite

And my heart is havened there,—

Under that mystical dark despair—

Under your rich black hair.

Oft have I looked in your eyes, O Night—

Night, my Night, with your rich black  
hair!—

Looked in your eyes till my face waned white

And my heart laid hold of a mad delight

That moaned as I held it there

Under the deeps of that dark despair—

Under your rich black hair.

Just for a kiss of your mouth, O Night—  
 Night, my Night, with your rich black  
 hair!—

Lo! will I wait as a dead man might  
 Wait for the Judgment's dawning light,  
 With my lips in a frozen prayer—  
 Under this lovable dark despair—  
 Under your rich black hair.

[*With swift change to mood of utter gaiety*]

Ho! ho! what will my dainty mistress say  
 When I shall stand knee-deep in the wet grass  
 Beneath her lattice, and with upturned eyes  
 And tongue out-lolling like the clapper of  
 A bell, outpour her *that*? I wonder now  
 If she will not put up her finger thus,  
 And say, "Hist! heart of mine! the angels call  
 To thee!" Ho! ho! Or will her blushing face  
 Light up her dim boudoir and, from her glass,  
 Flare back to her a flame upsprouting from  
 The hot-cored socket of a soul whose light  
 She thought long since had guttered out?—Ho! ho!  
 Or, haply, will she chastely bend above—  
 A Parian phantomette, with head atip  
 And twinkling fingers dusting down the dews  
 That glitter on the tarapyzma-vines  
 That riot round her casement—gathering  
 Lush blooms to pelt me with while I below  
 All winkingly await the fragrant shower?  
 Ho! ho! how jolly is this thing of love!

But how much richer, rarer, jollier  
 Than all the loves is this rare love of mine!  
 Why, my sweet Princess doth not even dream  
 I *am* her lover,—for, to here confess,  
 I have a way of wooing all mine own,  
 And waste scant speech in creamy compliment  
 And courtesies all gaumed with winy words.—  
 In sooth, I do not woo at all—I *win*!  
 How is it now the old duet doth glide  
 Itself full ripplingly adown the grooves  
 Of its quaint melody?—And whoso, by  
 The *bye*, or by the *way*, or *for the nonce*,  
 Or, eke ye, *peradventure*, ever durst  
 Render a duet singly but myself?

[*Singing—with grotesque mimicry of two voices*]

#### JUCKLET'S OSTENSIBLE DUET

How is it you woo?—and now answer me true,—  
 How is it you woo and you win?  
*Why, to answer you true,—the first thing that you*  
*do*  
*Is to simply, my dearest—begin.*

But how can I begin to woo or to win  
 When I don't know a Win from a Woo?  
*Why, cover your chin with your fan or your fin,*  
*And I'll introduce them to you.*

But what if it drew from my parents a view

With my own in no manner akin?

*No matter!—your view shall be first of the two,—*

*So I hasten to usher them in.*

Nay, stay! Shall I grin at the Woo or the Win?

And what will he do if I *do*?

*Why, the Woo will begin with “How pleasant it’s  
been!”*

*And the Win with “Delighted with you!”*

Then supposing he grew very dear to my view—

I’m speaking, you know, of the Win?

*Why, then, you should do what he wanted you to,—*

*And now is the time to begin.*

The time to begin? O then usher him in—

Let him say what he wants me to do.

*He is here.—He’s a twin of yourself,—I am “Win,”*

*And you are, my darling, my “Woo”!*

*[Capering and courtesying to feigned audience]*

That song I call most sensible nonsense;

And if the fair and peerless Dwainie were

But here, with that sweet voice of hers, to take

The part of “Woo,” I’d be the happiest “Win”

On this side of futurity! Ho! ho!

DWAINIE *[Aside to AMPHINE]*

What means he?

AMPHINE

Why, he means that throatless head  
Of his needs further chucking down betwixt  
His cloven shoulders!

[*Starting forward—Dwainie detaining him*]

DWAINIE

Nay, thou shalt not stir!  
See! now the monster hath discovered our  
Repast. Hold! Let us mark him further.

JUCKLET [*Archly eying viands*]

What!

A roasted wheffle and a toc-spiced whum,  
Tricked with a larvey and a gherghgling's tail!—  
And, sprit me! wine enough to swim them in!  
Now I should like to put a question to  
The *guests*; but as there *are* none, I direct  
Mine interrogatory to the host. [*Bowing to vacancy*]

Am I behind time?—Then I can but trust  
My tardy coming may be overlooked  
In my most active effort to regain  
A gracious tolerance by service now:—  
Directing rapt attention to the fact  
That I have brought mine appetite along,

I can but feel, ho! ho! that further words  
Would be a waste of speech.

[Sits at table—pours out wine, drinks and eats  
voraciously]

—There was a time  
When I was rather backward in my ways  
In courtly company (as though, forsooth,  
I felt not, from my very birth, the swish  
Of royal blood along my veins, though bred  
Amongst the treacled scullions and the thralls  
I shot from, like a cork, in youthful years,  
Into court favor by my wit's sheer stress  
Of fomentation.—*Pah! the stench o' toil!*)  
Ay, somehow, as I think, I've all outgrown  
That coarse, nice age, wherein one makes a meal  
Of two estardles and a fork of soup.  
Hey! sanaloo! Lest my starved stomach stand  
Awe-stricken and aghast, with mouth agape  
Before the rich profusion of this feast,  
I lubricate it with a glass of merl  
And coax it on to more familiar terms  
Of fellowship with those delectables.  
[Pours wine and holds up goblet with mock courtli-  
ness]  
Mine host!—Thou of the viewless presence and  
Hush-haunted lip:—Thy most imperial,  
Ethereal, and immaterial health!  
Live till the sun dries up, and comb thy cares



With star-prongs till the comets fizzle out  
And fade away and fail and are no more!

[*Drains and refills goblet*]

And, if thou wilt permit me to observe,—  
The gleaming shaft of spirit in this wine  
Goes whistling to its mark, and full and fair  
Zipps to the target-center of my soul!  
Why, now am I the veriest gentleman  
That ever buttered woman with a smile,  
And let her melt and run and drip and ooze  
All over and around a wanton heart!  
And if my mistress bent above me now,  
In all my hideous deformity,  
I think she would look over, as it were,  
The hump upon my back, and so forget  
The kinks and knuckles of my crooked legs,  
In this enchanting smile, she needs must leap,  
Love-dazzled, and fall faint and fluttering  
Within these yawning, all-devouring arms  
Of mine! Ho! ho! And yet Crestillomeem  
Would have me blight my dainty Dwainie with  
This feather from the Devil's wing!—But I  
Am far too full of craft to spoil the eyes  
That yet shall pour their love like nectar out  
Into mine own,—and I am far too deep  
For royal wit to wade my purposes.

DWAINIE [*To AMPHINE*]

What can he mean?

AMPHINE [*Chafing in suppressed frenzy*]

Ha! to rush forward and  
Tear out his tongue and slap it in his face!

DWAINIE [*To AMPHINE*]

Nay, nay! Hist what he saith!

JUCKLET

How big a fool—

How all magnificent an idiot  
Would I be to blight *her*—(my peerless one!—  
My very soul's soul!) as Crestillomeem  
Doth instigate me to, for *her* hate's sake—  
And inward *jealousy*, as well, belike!—  
Wouldst have my Dwainie blinded to my charms—  
For charms, good sooth, were every several flaw  
Of my malformed outer-self, compared  
With that his Handsomeness the Prince Amphine  
Shalt change to at a breath of my puff'd cheek,  
E'en were it weedy-bearded at the time  
With such a stubble as a huntsman well  
Might lose his spaniel in! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!  
I fear me, O my coy Crestillomeem,  
Thine ancient coquetry doth challenge still  
Thine own vain admiration overmuch!  
*I* to crush *her*?—when thou, as certainly,  
Hast armed me to smite down the only bar  
That lies betwixt her love and mine? Ho! ho!

Hey! but the revel I shall riot in  
 Above the beauteous Prince, instantuously  
 Made all abhorrent as a reptiled bulk!  
 Ho! ho! my princely wooer of the fair  
 Rare lady of mine own superior choice!  
 Pah! but my very 'maginings of him  
 Refined to that shamèd, sickening shape,  
 Do so beloathe me of him there be qualms  
 Expostulating in my forum now!  
 Ho! what unprincipifying properties  
 Of medication hath her Majesty  
 Put in my tender charge! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!  
 Ah, Dwainie! sweetest sweet! what shock to  
 thee?—

I wonder when she sees the human toad  
 Squat at her feet and cock his filmy eyes  
 Upon her and croak love, if she will not  
 Call me to tweezer him with two long sticks  
 And toss him from her path.—O ho! Ho! ho!  
 Hell bend him o'er some blossom quick, that I  
 May have one brother in the flesh!

[*Nods drowsily*]

DWAINIE [*To AMPHINE*]

Ha! See!  
 He groweth drunken.—Soh! Bide yet a spell  
 And I will vex him with my sorcery:  
 Then shall we hence,—for lo, the node when all  
 Our sublest arts and strategies must needs

Be quickened into acts and swift results.  
 Now bide thou here, and in mute silence mark  
 The righteous penalty that hath accrued  
 Upon that dwarfed monster.

*[She stands, still in concealment from the dwarf, her tense gaze fixed upon him as though in mute and painful act of incantation.—JUCKLET affected drowsily—yawns and mumbles incoherently—stretches, and gradually sinks at full length on the sward.—DWAINIE moves forward—AMPHINE, following, is about to set foot contemptuously on sleeper's breast, but is caught and held away by DWAINIE, who imperiously waves him back, and still, in pantomime, commanding, bids him turn and hide his face—AMPHINE obeying as though unable to do otherwise. Dwainie then unbinds her hair, and throwing it all forward covering her face and bending till it trails the ground, she lifts to the knee her dress, and so walks backward in a circle round the sleeping JUCKLET, crooning to herself an incoherent song. Then pausing, letting fall her gown, and rising to full stature, waves her hands above the sleeper's face, and runs to AMPHINE, who turns about and gazes on her with new wonderment.]*

DWAINIE *[To AMPHINE]*

Now shalt thou  
 Look on such scaith as thou hath never dreamed.

[*As she speaks, half averting her face as with melancholy apprehension, chorus of lugubrious voices heard chanting discordantly*].

VOICES

When the fat moon smiles,  
 And the comets kiss,  
 And the elves of Spirkland flit  
 The Whanghoo twunkers  
 A tune like this,  
 And the Nightmares champ the bit.

[*As chorus dies away, a comet, freighted with weird shapes, dips from the night and trails near JUCKLET'S sleeping figure, while with attendant goblin-forms, two Nightmares, CREECH and GRITCHFANG, alight.—The comet kisses, switches its tail and disappears, while the two goblins hover buzzingly over JUCKLET, who starts wide-eyed and stares fixedly at them, with horribly contorted features.*]

CREECH [To GRITCHFANG]

Buzz!

Buzz!

Buzz!

Buzz!

Flutter your wings like your grandmother does!  
 Tuck in your chin and wheel over and *whir-r-r*

Like a dickerbug fast in the web of the wuhrr!  
 Reel out your tongue, and untangle your toes  
 And rattle your claws o'er the bridge of his nose;  
 Tickle his ears with your feathers and fuzz,  
 And keep up a hum like your grandmother does!

[JUCKLET *moans and clutches at air convulsively*]

AMPHINE [*Shuddering*]

Most gruesome sight! See how the poor worm  
 writhes!  
 How must he suffer!

DWAINIE

Ay, but good is meant—  
 A far voice sings it so.

GRITCHFANG [*To CREECH*]

Let me dive deep in his nostriline caves  
 And keep an eye out as to how he behaves:  
 Fasten him down while I put him to rack—  
 And don't let him flop from the flat of his back!  
 [*Shrinks to minute size, while goblin attendants  
 pluck from shrubbery a great lily-shaped flower  
 which they invert funnel-wise, with small end  
 at sleeper's nostrils, hoisting GRITCHFANG in  
 at top and jostling shape downward gradually*]

*from sight, and—removing flower,—voice of  
GRITCHFANG continues gleefully from within  
sleeper's head]*

Ho! I have bored through the floor of his brains,  
And set them all writhing with torturous pains;  
And I shriek out the prayer, as I whistle and whiz,  
I may be the nightmare that my grandmother is!  
[*Reappears, through reversal of flower method, as-  
suming former shape, crosses to CREECH, and,  
joining, the twain dance on sleeper's stomach  
in broken time to duo]*

### Duo

Whing!

Whang!

So our ancestors sang!  
And they guzzled hot blood and blew up with a  
*bang!*—  
But they ever tenaciously clung to the rule  
To only blow up in the hull of a fool—  
To fizz and explode like a cast-iron toad  
In the cavernous depths where his victuals were  
stowed—  
When chances were ripest and thickest and best  
To burst every buttonhole out of his vest!

[*They pause, float high above, and fusing together  
into a great square iron weight drop  
heavily on chest of sleeper, who moans pite-  
ously.*]



AMPHINE [*Hiding his face*]

Ah! take me hence!

[DWAINIE leads him off, looking backward as she goes and waving her hands imploringly to CREECH and GRITCHFANG, reassuming former shapes, in ecstasies of insane delight]

CREECH [*To GRITCHFANG*]

Zipp!

Zipp!

Zipp!

Zipp!

Sting his tongue raw and unravel his lip!

Grope, on the right, down his windpipe, and squeeze  
His liver as dry as a petrified wheeze!

[GRITCHFANG—as before—shrinks and disappears  
at sleeper's mouth]

Throttle his heart till he's black in the face,

And bury it down in some desolate place

Where only remorse in pent agony lives

To dread the advice that your grandmother gives!

[*The sleeper struggles contortedly, while voice of  
GRITCHFANG calls from within*]

GRITCHFANG

Ho-ho! I have clambered the rungs of his ribs  
And beriddled his lungs into tatters and dribs;

And I turn up the tube of his heart like a hose  
And squirt all the blood to the end of his nose!  
I stamp on his stomach and caper and prance,  
With my tail tossing round like a boomerang-lance!  
And thus may success ever crown my intent  
To wander the ways that my grandmother went!

*[Reappears, falls hysterically in CREECH'S out-  
stretched arms.—Then dance and duo.]*

Duo

Whing!

Whung!

So our ancestors sung!  
And they snorted and pawed, and they hissed and  
they stung,—  
Taking special terrific delight in their work  
On the fools that they found in the lands of the  
Spirk.—  
And each little grain of their powders of pain  
They scraped up and pestled again and again—  
Mixed in quadruple doses for gluttons and sots,  
Till they strangled their dreams with gung-jibbrous  
knots!

*[The comet again trails past, upon which the Night-  
mares leap and disappear. JUCKLET staggers  
to his feet and glares frenziedly around—then  
starts for opposite exit of comet—is there sud-  
denly confronted with fiend-faces in the air,  
bewhiskered with ragged purplish flames that*

*flare audibly and huskily in abrupt alternating chill gasps and hot welterings of wind. He starts back from them, reels and falls prostrate, groveling terrifiedly in the dust, and chattering, with eerie music accompanying his broken utterance.]*

## JUCKLET

Æo! Æo! Æo!

Thou dost all things know—

Waving all claims of mine to *dare* to pray,  
Save that I needs *must*:—Lo,

What *may* I pray for? Yea,  
I have not *any* way,

An *Thou* gainsayest me a tolerance so.—

I dare not pray

*Forgiveness*—too great

My vast o’ertoppling weight

Of sinning; nor can I

Pray my

Poor soul uncourged to go.—

Frame *Thou* my prayer, Æo!

*What* may I pray for? Dare

I shape a prayer,

In sooth,

For any canceled joy

Of my mad youth,

Or any bliss my sin’s stress did destroy?

What may I pray for—What?—

That the wild clusters of forget-me-not  
    And mignonette  
    And violet  
Be out of childhood brought,  
    And in mine hard heart set  
    A-blooming now as then?—  
    With all their petals yet  
Bediamonded with dew—  
Their sweet, sweet scent let loose  
    Full sumptuously again!

What *may* I pray, Æo!  
    For the poor hutchèd cot  
    Where death sate squat  
Midst my first memories?—Lo!  
My mother's face—(they, whispering, told me  
    so)—  
    That face!—so pinchedly  
    It blanched up, as they lifted me—  
        Its frozen eyelids would  
        Not part, nor could  
    Be ever wetted open with warm tears.  
    . . . Who hears  
The prayers for all dead-mother-sakes, Æo!

Leastwise *one* mercy:—May  
I not have leave to pray  
All *self* to pass away—  
    Forgetful of all needs mine own—  
    Neglectful of all creeds;—alone,

Stand fronting Thy high throne and say:  
To Thee,  
O Infinite, I pray  
Shield *Thou* mine enemy!

*[Music throughout supplication gradually softens  
and sweetens into utter gentleness, with scene  
slow-fading into densest night.]*

END ACT II

## ACT III

SCENE I. *Court of KRUNG—Royal Ministers, Counselors, etc., in session. CRESTILLOMEEM, in full blazonry of regal attire, presiding. She signals a Herald at her left, who steps forward.—Blare of trumpets, greeted with ominous murmurings within, blent with tumult from without.*

### HERALD

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,  
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,  
Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal  
And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—  
Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,  
Her royal presence—

[*Voice of Herald fails abruptly—utterly.—A breathless hush falls sudden on the court.—A sense oppressive—ominous—affects the throng. Weird music heard of unseen instruments.*]

HERALD [*Huskily striving to be heard*]

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,

The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,  
Crestillomeem—

[*The Queen gasps, and clutches at Herald, mutely signing him to silence, her staring eyes fixed on a shadowy figure, mistily developing before her into wraith-like form and likeness of The Tune-Fool, SPRAIVOLL. The shape—evidently invisible and voiceless to all senses but the Queen's—wavers vaporishly to and fro before her, moaning and crooning in infinitely sweet-sad minor cadences a mystic song.*]

#### WRAITH-SONG OF SPRAIVOLL

*I will not hear the dying word  
Of any friend, nor stroke the wing  
Of any little wounded bird.  
. . . Love is the deadest thing!*

*I wist not if I see the smile  
Of prince or wight, in court or lane.—  
I only know that afterwhile  
He will not smile again.*

*The summer blossom, at my feet,  
Swims backward, drowning in the grass.—  
I will not stay to name it sweet—  
Sink out! and let me pass!*

*I have no mind to feel the touch  
Of gentle hands on brow and hair.—  
The lack of this once pained me much,  
And so I have a care.*

*Dead weeds, and husky-rustling leaves  
That beat the dead boughs where ye cling,  
And old dead nests beneath the eaves—  
Love is the deadest thing!*

*Ah! once I fared not all alone;  
And once—no matter, rain or snow!—  
The stars of summer ever shone—  
Because I loved him so!*

*With always tremblings in his hands,  
And always blushes unaware,  
And always ripples down the strands  
Of his long yellow hair.*

*I needs must weep a little space,  
Remembering his laughing eyes  
And curving lip, and lifted face  
Of rapture and surprise.*

*O joy is dead in every part,  
And life and hope; and so I sing:  
In all the graveyard of my heart  
Love is the deadest thing!*



[*With dying away of song, apparition of SPRAIVOLL slowly vanishes. CRESTILLOMEEM turns dazedly to throng, and with labored effort strives to reassume imperious mien.—Signs for merl and tremulously drains goblet—sinks back in throne with feigned complacency, mutely waving Herald to proceed.*]

HERALD [*Mechanically*]

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,  
 The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,  
 Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal  
 And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—  
 Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,  
 Her royal presence, as by him empowered  
 To sit and occupy, maintain and hold,  
 And therefrom rule the Throne, in sovereign  
                   state,  
 And work the royal will—[*Confusion*] Hist,  
                   ho! Ay, ay!  
 Ay, ay!—And be it known, the King, in view  
 Of his approaching dissolution—

[*Sensation among Counselors, etc., within, and wild tumult without and cries of “Long live the King!” and “Treason!” “Intrigue!” “Sorcery!” CRESTILLOMEEM, in suppressed ire, waving silence, and Herald striving to be heard.*]

HERALD

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—The King, in view  
Of his approaching dissolution, hath  
Decreed this instrument—this royal scroll

*[Unrolling and displaying scroll]*

With royal seal thereunto set by Krung's  
Most sacred act and sign—

*[General sensation within, and growing tumult  
without, with wrangling cries of "Plot!"  
"Treason!" "Conspiracy!" and "Down with the  
Queen!" "Down with the usurper!" "Down  
with the Sorceress!"]*

CRESTILLOMEEM *[Wildly]*

Who dares to cry  
"Conspiracy!" Bring me the traitor-knave!

*[Growing confusion without—sound of rioting.—  
Voice, "Let me be taken! Let me be taken!"  
Enter Guards, dragging JUCKLET forward,  
wild-eyed and hysterical—the Queen's gaze  
fastened on him wonderingly.]*

CRESTILLOMEEM *[To Guards]*

Why bring ye Jucklet hither in this wise?

## GUARD

O Queen, 'tis he who cries "Conspiracy!"  
 And who incites the mob without with cries  
 Of "Plot!" and "Treason!"

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Starting*]

Ha! Can this be true?  
 I'll not believe it!—Jucklet is my fool,  
 But not so vast a fool that he would tempt  
 His gracious Sovereign's ire. [*To Guards*] Let  
 him be freed!

[*Then to JUCKLET, with mock service*]

Stand hither, O my Fool!

JUCKLET [*To Queen*]

What! I, thy fool?  
 Ho! ho! Thy fool?—ho! ho!—Why, thou art  
*mine!*

[*Confusion—cries of "Strike down the traitor!"*  
 JUCKLET wrenching himself from grasp of  
*officers*]

Back, all of ye! I have not waded hell  
 That I should fear your puny enmity!  
 Here will I give ye proof of all I say!

[*Presses toward throne, wedging his opposers left and right—CRESTILLOMEEM sits as though stricken speechless—pallid, waving him back—JUCKLET, fairly fronting her, with folded arms—then to throng continues.*]

Lo! do I here defy her to lift up  
Her voice and say that Jucklet speaks a lie.

[*At sign of Queen, Officers, unperceived by JUCKLET, close warily behind him.*]

And, further—I pronounce the document  
That craven Herald there holds in his hand  
A forgery—a trick—and dare the Queen,  
Here in my listening presence, to command  
Its further utterance!

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Wildly rising*].

Hold, hireling!—Fool!—  
The Queen thou dost in thy mad boasts insult  
Shall utter first thy doom!

[*JUCKLET, seized from behind by Guards, is hurled face upward on the dais at her feet, while a minion, with drawn sword pressed close against his breast, stands over him.*]

—Ere we proceed  
With graver matters, let this demon-knave  
Be sent back home to hell.

*[With awful stress of ire, form quivering, eyes glittering and features twitched and ashen]*

Give me the sword,—  
The insult hath been mine—so even shall  
The vengeance be!

*[As CRESTILLOMEEM seizes sword and bends forward to strike, JUCKLET, with superhuman effort, frees his hand, and, with a sudden motion and an incoherent muttering, flings object in his assailant's face,—CRESTILLOMEEM staggers backward, dropping sword, and, with arms tossed aloft, shrieks, totters and falls prone upon the pave. In confusion following JUCKLET mysteriously vanishes; and as the bewildered Courtiers lift the fallen Queen, a clear, piercing voice of thrilling sweetness is heard singing.]*

#### VOICE

The pride of noon must wither soon—  
The dusk of death must fall;  
Yet out of darkest night the moon  
Shall blossom over all!

*[For an instant a dense cloud envelops empty throne—then gradually lifts, discovering therein KRUNG seated, in royal panoply and state, with JUCKLET in act of presenting scepter to him.—Blare of trumpets, and chorus of Courtiers, Ministers, Heralds, etc.]*

CHORUS

All hail! Long live the King!

KRUNG [*To throng, with grave salutation*]

Through Æo's own great providence, and  
through  
The intervention of an angel whom  
I long had deemed forever lost to me,  
Once more your favored Sovereign, do I greet  
And tender you my blessing, O most good  
And faith-abiding subjects of my realm!  
In common, too, with your long-suffering King,  
Have ye long suffered, blamelessly as he:  
Now, therefore, know ye all what, until late,  
He knew not of himself, and with him share  
The rapturous assurance that is his,—  
That, for all time to come, are we restored  
To the old glory and most regal pride  
And opulence and splendor of our realm.

[*Turning with pained features to the strangely  
stricken Queen*]

There have been, as ye needs must know,  
strange spells  
And wicked sorceries at work within  
The very dais boundaries of the Throne.  
Lo! then, behold your harrier and mine,  
And with me grieve for the self-ruined Queen

Who grovels at my feet, blind, speechless, and  
 So stricken with a curse herself designed  
 Should light upon Hope's fairest minister.

[*Motions attendants, who lead away CRESTILLO-MEEM—the King gazing after her, overmastered with stress of his emotions.—He leans heavily on throne, as though oblivious to all surroundings, and, shaping into speech his varying thought, as in a trance, speaks as though witless of both utterance and auditor.*]

I loved her.—Why? I never knew.—Perhaps  
 Because her face was fair; perhaps because  
 Her eyes were blue and wore a weary air;—  
 Perhaps . . . perhaps because her limpid face  
 Was eddied with a restless tide, wherein  
 The dimples found no place to anchor and  
 Abide: perhaps because her tresses beat  
 A froth of gold about her throat, and poured  
 In splendor to the feet that ever seemed  
 Afloat. Perhaps because of that wild way  
 Her sudden laughter overleapt propriety;  
 Or—who will say?—perhaps the way she wept.  
 Ho! have ye seen the swollen heart of summer  
 Tempest, o'er the plain, with throbs of thunder  
 Burst apart and drench the earth with rain? She  
 Wept like that.—And to recall, with one wild  
 glance  
 Of memory, our last love-parting—tears

And all. . . . It thrills and maddens me! And  
yet

My dreams will hold her, flushed from lifted brow  
To finger-tips, with passion's ripest kisses  
Crushed and mangled on her lips. . . . O  
woman! while

Your face was fair, and heart was pure, and lips  
Were true, and hope as golden as your hair,  
I should have strangled you!

[*As KRUNG, ceasing to speak, piteously lifts his face, SPRAIVOLL all suddenly appears, in space left vacant by the Queen, and, kneeling, kisses the King's hand.—He bends in tenderness, kissing her brow—then lifts and seats her at his side. Speaks then to throng.*]

Good Subjects—Lords:

Behold in this sweet woman here my child,  
Whom, years ago, the cold, despicable  
Crestillomeem—by baleful, wicked arts  
And gruesome spells and fearsome witcheries—  
Did spirit off to some strange otherland,  
Where, happily, a Wunkland Princess found  
Her, and undid the spell by sorcery  
More potent—ay, *Divine*, since it works naught  
But *good*—the gift of *Æo*, to right wrong.  
This magic dower the Wunkland Princess hath  
Enlisted in our restoration here,  
In secret service, till this joyful hour  
Of our complete deliverance. Even thus.—  
I o, let the peerless Princess now appear!



[*He lifts scepter, and a gust of melody, divinely beautiful, sweeps through the court.—The star above the throne loosens and drops slowly downward, bursting like a bubble on the scepter-tip, and, issuing therefrom, AMPHINE and DWAINIE, hand in hand, kneel at the feet of KRUNG, who bends above them with his blessing, while JUCKLET capers wildly round the group.*]

## JUCKLET

Ho! ho! but I could shriek for very joy!  
 And though my recent rival, fair Amphine,  
 Doth even now bend o'er a blossom, I,  
 Besprit me! have no lingering desire  
 To meddle with it, though with but one eye  
 I slept the while she backward walked around  
 Me in the garden.

[*AMPHINE dubiously smiles—JUCKLET blinks and leers—and DWAINIE bites her finger.*]

## KRUNG

Peace! good Jucklet! Peace!  
 For this is not a time for any jest.—  
 Though the old order of our realm hath been  
 Restored, and though restored my very life—  
 Though I have found a daughter,—I have lost

A son—for Dwainie, with her sorcery,  
Will, on the morrow, carry him away.  
'Tis Æo's largess, as our love is His,  
And our abiding trust and gratefulness.

CURTAIN

## WHEN I DO MOCK

WHEN I do mock the blackness of the night  
With my despair—outweep the very dews  
And wash my wan cheeks stark of all delight,  
Denying every counsel of dear use  
In mine embittered state; with infinite  
Perversity, mine eyes drink in no sight  
Of pleasance that nor moon nor stars refuse  
In silver largess and gold twinklings bright;—  
I question me what mannered brain is mine  
That it doth trick me of the very food  
It panteth for—the very meat and wine  
That yet should plump my starvèd soul with  
good  
And comfortable plethora of ease,  
That I might drowse away such rhymes as these.

## THE HIGHEST GOOD

**T**O attain the highest good  
Of true man and womanhood,  
Simply do your honest best—  
God with joy will do the rest.

## EZRA HOUSE

*[These lines was writ, in ruther high sperits, jest at the close of what's called the Anti Bellum Days, and more to be a-foolin' than anything else,—though they is more er less facts in it. But some of the boys, at the time we was all a-singin' it, fer Ezry's benefit, to the old tune of "The Oak and the Ash and the Bonny Willer Tree," got it struck off in the weekly, without leave er lisence of mine; and so sence they's allus some of 'em left to rigg me about it yit, I might as well claim the thing right here and now, so here goes. I give it jest as it appeard, fixed up and grammatisized consider'ble, as the editer told me he took the liburty of doin', in that sturling old home paper THE ADVANCE—as sound a paper yit to-day and as stanch and abul as you'll find in a hunderd.]*

COME listen, good people, while a story I do tell,  
Of the sad fate of one which I knew so passing well;  
He enlisted at McCordsville, to battle in the South,  
And protect his country's union; his name was  
Ezra House.

He was a young school-teacher, and educated high  
In regards to Ray's arithmetic, and also Algebra:  
He give good satisfaction, but at his country's call  
He dropped his position, his Algebra and all.

"It's oh, I'm going to leave you, kind scholars," he said—

For he wrote a composition the last day and read;  
And it brought many tears in the eyes of the school,  
To say nothing of his sweetheart he was going to  
leave so soon.

"I have many recollections to take with me away,  
Of the merry transpirations in the schoolroom so  
gay;  
And of all that's past and gone I will never regret  
I went to serve my country at the first of the out-  
set!"

He was a good penman, and the lines that he wrote  
On that sad occasion was too fine for me to quote,—  
For I was there and heard it, and I ever will recall  
It brought the happy tears to the eyes of us all.

And when he left, his sweetheart she fainted away.  
And said she could never forget the sad day  
When her lover so noble, and galliant and gay,  
Said "Fare you well, my true love!" and went  
marching away.

But he hadn't been gone for more than two months,  
When the sad news come—"he was in a skirmish  
once,  
And a cruel Rebel ball had wounded him full sore  
In the region of the chin, through the canteen he  
wore."

But his health recruited up, and his wounds they  
got well,  
But whilst he was in battle at Bull Run or Malvern  
Hill,  
The news come again, so sorrowful to hear—  
“A sliver from a bombshell cut off his right ear.”

But he stuck to the boys, and it's often he would  
write,  
That “he wasn't afraid for his country to fight.”  
But oh, had he returned on a furlough, I believe  
He would not, to-day, have such cause to grieve.

For in another battle—the name I never heard—  
He was guarding the wagons when an accident oc-  
curred,—  
A comrade who was under the influence of drink,  
Shot him with a musket through the right cheek, I  
think.

But his dear life was spared ; but it hadn't been for  
long,  
Till a cruel Rebel colonel come riding along,  
And struck him with his sword, as many do sup-  
pose,  
For his cap-rim was cut off, and also his nose.

But Providence, who watches o'er the noble and the  
brave,  
Snatched him once more from the jaws of the  
grave ;

And just a little while before the close of the war,  
He sent his picture home to his girl away so far.

And she fell into decline, and she wrote in reply,  
"She had seen his face again and was ready to die";  
And she wanted him to promise, when she was in  
her tomb,  
He would only visit that by the light of the moon.

But he never returned at the close of the war,  
And the boys that got back said he hadn't the heart;  
But he got a position in a powder-mill, and said  
He hoped to meet the doom that his country denied.



## THE VISION OF RABBI BEN ISAAC

FOR three score years my wandering feet have  
strayed

Along a path wherein no footprint lay  
Of Him, who of the cross a guide-board made  
To point me out the way.

With open eyes I dreamed that I was dead—  
Dead to all outward semblance, though I lay  
With some old scrap of reason in my head  
That would not fade away.

And peering up in wonderment I saw  
My floating spirit plume its wings elate,  
Yet gazing upward with a look of awe,  
It seemed to hesitate.

"Go on!" I called to it. "Leap into space,  
And sweep a way to glory with thy wings!"  
"Alas!" it answered back, with troubled face,  
"They are such trembling things!"

And hovering above me, spread them wide,  
And all their glossy plumage o'er my eyes  
Shook out in downy splendor, crimson-dyed  
With hues of Paradise.

"Nay, glorious things are they," I cried amazed,  
And veiled my vision from their dazzling light—  
"So, get thee gone—their maker must be praised"—  
And upward through the night

It lifted like a meteor, and sailed  
Across the gulf of darkness like a flame,  
While down the smoldering wake behind it trailed  
The ashes of my name.

It called to me—not larger than a flake  
Of starlight did it glimmer through the gloom—  
"Pray for me," fell the voice, "for Jesus' sake!  
I see the heavens bloom."

And loathful to myself I whispered then,  
As wholly from my gaze the glimmer went—  
"O Lord, through Christ, receive my soul, Amen."  
And like an instrument

Of music in some heavenly tumult tipped,  
Outpouring the elixir of its voice,  
Down-showering upon my senses dripped  
The utterance, "Rejoice!

"God listens, for the angels at the door  
Are swarming out and in and out again,  
And o'er and round about me evermore  
They sing 'Good will to men!'"

Then suddenly the voice in quaverings  
Fell wailingly—"Alas! for I alone  
Of all the glorious throng have tarnished wings  
That Heaven will not own.

"The angel Truth has pityingly said  
That every plume impure Christ will condemn,  
And that the stain self-righteousness is red  
As blood on all of them."

Then to my soul I cried aloud: "Return  
That I may bow my head in holier prayer,  
And all the recompense of good I earn  
Shall blossom everywhere."

"Not so." It answered, as in some surprise—  
"The angel Faith has whispered 'Look above,'  
And shading with her wings my dazzled eyes,  
Points out the angel Love,

"Who, weeping, bends above me, and her tears  
Baptize me, and her sister Mercy trips  
Along the golden clouds, and Christ appears  
With sorrow on His lips"—

Then silence, and as one who vainly wars  
With inner strife: "Come back to me!" I cried,  
And peeling down a pathway of the stars  
A ringing voice replied—

"Now is thy soul's probation so complete  
It may but answer thee with one farewell";  
And, filtered through the gloom, lo! at my feet  
A snow-white feather fell.

DAN PAINE

OLD friend of mine, whose chiming name  
Has been the burthen of a rhyme  
Within my heart since first I came  
To know thee in thy mellow prime:  
With warm emotions in my breast  
That can but coldly be expressed,  
And hopes and wishes wild and vain,  
I reach my hand to thee, Dan Paine.

In fancy, as I sit alone  
In gloomy fellowship with care,  
I hear again thy cheery tone,  
And wheel for thee an easy chair;  
And from my hand the pencil falls—  
My book upon the carpet sprawls,  
As eager soul and heart and brain  
Leap up to welcome thee, Dan Paine.

A something gentle in thy mien,  
A something tender in thy voice,  
Has made my trouble so serene,  
I can but weep, from very choice.

And even then my tears, I guess,  
Hold more of sweet than bitterness,  
And more of gleaming shine than rain,  
Because of thy bright smile, Dan Paine.

The wrinkles that the years have spun  
And tangled round thy tawny face,  
Are kinked with laughter, every one,  
And fashioned in a mirthful grace.  
And though the twinkle of thine eyes  
Is keen as frost when Summer dies,  
It can not long as frost remain  
While thy warm soul shines out, Dan Paine.

And so I drain a health to thee:—  
May merry Joy and jolly Mirth  
Like children clamber on thy knee,  
And ride thee round the happy earth!  
And when, at last, the hand of Fate  
Shall lift the latch of Canaan's gate,  
And usher me in thy domain,  
Smile on me just as now, Dan Paine.

## OLD HEC'S IDOLATRY

**H** EIGH-O! our jolly tilts at New World  
song!—

What was the poem indeed! and where the bard—  
“Stabbing his ink-pot ever, not his heart,”

As Hector phrased it contumeliously,  
Mouthing and munching, at the orchard-stile,  
A water-cored rambo whose spirted juice  
Glanced, sprayed and flecked the sunlight as he  
mouth'd

And muncht, and muncht and mouth'd. All loved  
the man!

“Our Hector” as his *Alma Mater* oozed  
It into utterance—“Old Hec” said we  
Who knew him, hide-and-tallow, hoof-and-horn!  
So he: “O ay! my soul! our New World song—  
The tweedle-deedles of our modern school—  
A school of minnows,—not one gamy bass—  
To hook the angler, not the angler him.  
Here! all ye little fishes: tweedle-dee!  
Soh! one—along the vasty stream of time—  
Glints to the surface with a gasp,—and, lo,  
A bubble! and he thinks, ‘My eye!—see there,  
Ye little fishes,—there’s a song I’ve sung!’

Another gapes: another bubble; then  
 He thinks: 'Well, is it not a wondrous art  
 To breathe a great immortal poem like that!  
 And then another—and another still—  
 And yet another,—till from brim to brim  
 The tide is postuled over with a pest  
 Of bubbles—bursting bubbles! Ay! O ay!"  
 So, bluff old Hec. And we, who knew his mood  
 Had ramped its worst—unless we roused it yet  
 To ire's horifficest insanity  
 By some inane, unguarded reference  
 To "verse beragged in Hoosier dialect"—  
 (A strangely unforgotten coinage of  
 Old Hec's, long years ago)—we, so, forbore  
 A word, each glimpsing each, as down we sank,  
 Couched limply in the orchard's selvage, where—  
 The rambo finished and the soggy core  
 Zippt at a sapphire wasp with waist more slim  
 Than any slender lady's, of old wars,  
 Pent fasting for long sennights in tall towers  
 That overtop the undercringing seas—  
 With one accordant voice, the while he creased  
 His scroll of manuscript, we said, "Go on."  
 Then Hector thus:

AN IDYL OF THE KING

Erewhile, as Autumn, to King Arthur's court  
 Came Raelus, clamoring: "Lo, has our house  
 Been sacked and pillaged by a lawless band



Of robber knaves, led on by Alstanés,  
The Night-Flower named, because of her fair face,  
All like a lily gleaming in the dusk  
Of her dark hair—and like a lily brimmed  
With dewy eyes that drip their limpid smiles  
Like poison out, for by them has been wro't  
My elder brother's doom, as much I fear.  
While three days gone was holden harvest-feast  
At Lunion Castle—clinging like a gull  
High up the gray cliffs of Caerleon—  
Came, leaf-like lifted from the plain below  
As by a twisted wind, a rustling pack  
Of bandit pillagers, with Alstanés  
Bright-fluttering like a red leaf in the front.  
And ere we were aware of fell intent—  
Not knowing whether it was friend or foe—  
We found us in their toils, and all the house  
In place of guests held only prisoners—  
Save that the host, my brother, wro't upon  
By the strange beauty of the robber queen,  
Was left unfettered, but by silken threads  
Of fine-spun flatteries and wanton smiles  
Of the enchantress, till her villain thieves  
Had rifled as they willed and signal given  
To get to horse again. And so they went—  
Their leader flinging backward, as she rode,  
A kiss to my mad brother—mad since then,—  
For from that sorry hour he but talked  
Of Alstanés, and her rare beauty, and  
Her purity—ay, even that he said

Was star-white, and should light his life with love  
 Or leave him groping blindly in its quest  
 Thro' all eternity. So, sighing, he  
 Went wandering about till set of sun,  
 Then got to horse, and bade us all farewell;  
 And with his glamour'd eyes bent trancedly  
 Upon the tumbled sands that marked the way  
 The robber-woman went, he turned and chased  
 His long black shadow o'er the edge of night."

—So Raelus, all seemingly befret  
 With such concern as nipped his utterance  
 In scraps of speech: at which Sir Lancelot,  
 Lifting a slow smile to the King, and then  
 Turning his cool eye on the youth—"And you  
 Would track this siren-robber to her hold  
 And rout her rascal followers, and free  
 Your brother from the meshes of this queen  
 Of hearts—for there you doubtless think him?"

"Ay!"

Foamed Raelus, cheek flushed and eye aflame,—  
 "So even have I tracked, and found them, too,  
 And know their burrow, shrouded in a copse,  
 Where, faring in my brother's quest, I heard  
 The nicker of his horse; and followed on,  
 And found him tethered in a thicket wild,  
 As tangled in its tress of leaf and limb  
 As is a madman's hair; and down the path  
 That parted it and ran across a knoll  
 And dipped again, all suddenly I came

Upon a cave, wide-yawning 'neath a beard  
Of tangled moss and vine, whence issuing  
I heard, blown o'er my senses faint and clear  
As whiffs of summer wind, my brother's voice  
Lilting a love-song, with the burden tricked  
With dainty warblings of a woman's tongue:  
And even as I listening bent, I heard  
Such peals of wanton merriment as made  
My own heart flutter as a bird that beats  
For freedom at the bars that prison it.  
So turned I then and fled as one who flies  
To save himself alone—forgetful all  
Of that my dearer self—my brother.—O!"—  
Breaking as sharply as the icy blade  
That loosens from the eave to slice the air  
And splinter into scales of flying frost—  
"Thy help! Thy help! A dozen goodly knights—  
Ay, even that, if so it be their hearts  
Are hungry as my own to right the wrong!"

So Raelus. And Arthur graciously  
Gave ear to him, and, patient, heard him thro',  
And pitied him, and granted all he asked;  
Then took his hand and held it, saying, "Strong  
And ever stronger may its grasp be knit  
About the sword that flashes in the cause  
Of good."

Thus Raelus, on the morrow's front,  
Trapped like a knight and shining like a star,  
Pranced from the archway of the court, and led

His glittering lances down the gleaming road  
That river-like ran winding till it slipped  
Out of the palace view and spilled their shields  
Like twinkling bubbles o'er the mountain brim.

Then happed it that as Raelus rode, his tongue  
Kept even pace and cantered ever on  
Right merrily. His brother, as he said,  
Had such an idle soul within his breast—  
Such shallowness of fancy for his heart  
To drift about in—that he well believed  
Its anchor would lay hold on any smile  
The lees of womanhood might offer him.  
As for himself, he loved his brother well,  
Yet had far liefer see him stark and white  
In marble death than that his veins should burn  
With such vitality as spent its flame  
So garishly it knew no steady blaze,  
But ever wavered round as veered the wind  
Of his conceit; for he had made his boast—  
Tho' to his own shame did he speak of it—  
That with a wink he could buy every smile  
That virtue owned. So tattled Raelus  
Till, heated with his theme, he lifted voice  
And sang the song, "The Light of Woman's Eyes!"

"O bright is gleaming morn on mountain height;  
And bright the moon, slipt from its sheath of  
night,—

But brighter is the light of woman's eyes.

"And bright the dewdrop, trembling on the lip  
Of some red rose, or lily petal-tip,  
Or lash of pink,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright is the firefly's ever-drifting spark  
That throbs its pulse of light out in the dark;  
And bright the stars,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright morn or even; bright or moon or star,  
And all the many twinkling lights that are,—  
O brighter than ye all are woman's eyes."

So Raelus sang.—And they who rode with him  
Bewildered were, and even as he sang  
Went straggling, twos and threes, and fell behind  
To whisper wonderingly, "Is he a fool?"  
And "Does he waver in his mind?" and "Does  
The newness of adventure dazzle him?"  
So spake they each to each, till far beyond,  
With but one loathful knight in company,  
They saw him quit the beaten track, and turn  
Into the grassy margin of a wood.  
And loitering, they fell in mocking jest  
Of their strange leader! "See! why, see!" said  
one,—

"He needs no help to fight his hornets' nest,  
But one brave knight to squire him!"—pointing on  
To where fared on the two and disappeared.  
"O ay!" said one, "belike he is some old  
War-battered knight of long-forgotten age,  
That, bursting from his chrysalis, the grave,

Comes back to show us tricks we never dreamed!"  
 "Or haply," said another, with a laugh,—  
 "He rides ahead to tell them that he comes  
 And shrive them ere his courage catches up."  
 And merry made they all, and each in turn  
 Filliped a witty pellet at his head:  
 Until, at last, their shadows shrunk away  
 And shortened 'neath them and the hour was noon,  
 They flung them from their horses listlessly  
 Within the grassy margin of the wood  
 Where had passed Raelus an hour ago:  
 And, hungered, spied a rustic; and they sent  
 To have them such refreshment as might be  
 Found at the nearest farm,—where, as it chanced,  
 Was had most wholesome meat, and milk, and  
     bread;  
 And honey, too, celled in its fretted vase  
 Of gummy gold and dripping nectar-sweet  
 As dreamed-of kisses from the lips of love;  
 Wine, too, was broughten, rosy as the dawn  
 That ushers in the morning of the heart;  
 And tawny, mellow pear, whose golden ore  
 Fell molten on the tongue and oozed away  
 In creamy and delicious nothingness;  
 And netted melon, musky as the breath  
 Of breezes blown from out the Orient;  
 And purple clusterings of plum and grape,  
 Blurred with a dust dissolving at the touch  
 Like flakes the fairies had snowed over them.  
 And as the idlers basked, with toast and song  
 And graceful dalliance and wanton jest,

A sound of trampling hooves and jingling reins  
Brake sudden, stilled them; and from out a dim  
Path leading from the bosky wood there came  
A troop of mounted damsels, nigh a score,  
Led by a queenly girl, in crimson clad,  
With lissome figure lithe and willowy,  
And face as fair and sweet and pure withal  
As might a maiden lily-blossom be  
Ere it has learned the sin of perfect bloom:  
Her hair, blown backward like a silken scarf  
And fondled by the sun, was glossier  
And bluer black than any raven's wing.  
"And O!" she laughed, not knowing she was heard  
By any but her fellows: "Men are fools!"  
Then drawing rein, and wheeling suddenly,  
Her charger mincing backward,—"*Raelus*—  
My *Raelus* is greater than ye all,  
Since he is such a fool that he forgets  
He is a man, and lets his tongue of love  
Run babbling like a silly child's; and, pah!  
I puff him to the winds like thistle-down!"  
And, wheeling as she spake, found staring up,  
Wide-eyed and wondering, a group of knights,  
Half lifted, as their elbows propped their heads,  
Half lying; and one, smirker than the rest,  
Stood bowing very low, with upturned eyes  
Lit with a twinkling smile: "Fair lady—and  
Most gracious gentlewomen"—seeing that  
The others drew them back as tho' abashed  
And veiled their faces with all modesty,  
Tho' she, their leader, showed not any qualm,—



"Since all unwittingly we overheard  
Your latest speech, and since we know at last  
'All men are fools,' right glad indeed am I  
That such a nest of us remains for you  
To vanquish with those eyes." Then, serious,  
That she nor smiled nor winced, nor anything—  
"Your pardon will be to me as a shower  
Of gracious rain unto a panting drouth."  
So bowed in humblest reverence; at which  
The damsel, turning to her followers,  
Laughed musically,—*"See! he proves my words!"*  
Whereat the others joined with inward glee  
Her pealing mirth; and in the merriment  
The knights chimed, too, and he, the vanquished one,  
Till all the wood rang as at hunting-tide  
When bugle-rumors float about the air  
And echoes leap and revel in delight.  
Then spake the vanquished knight, with mental eye  
Sweeping the vantage-ground that chance had  
gained,—

"Your further pardon, lady: Since the name  
Of Raelus fell from those lips of thine,  
We fain would know of him. He led us here,  
And as he went the way wherefrom your path  
Emerges, haply you may tell us where  
He may be found?"

"What! Raelus?" she cried,—

"He comes with you?—The brave Sir Raelus?—  
That mighty champion?—that gallant knight?—  
That peerless wonder of all nobleness?  
Then proud am I to greet ye, knowing that;



And, certes, had I known of it ere now,  
Then had I proffered you more courtesy  
And told you, ere the asking, that he bides  
The coming of his friends a league from this,  
Hard by a reedy mere, where in high tune  
We left him singing, nigh an hour ago.”  
Then, as she lightly wheeled her horse about  
And signal gave to her companions  
To follow, gaily cried: “Tell Raelus  
His cousin sends to him her sad farewells  
And fond regrets, and kisses many as  
His valorous deeds are numbered in her heart.”  
And with “Fair morrow to ye, gentle knights!”  
Her steed's hooves struck the highway at a bound;  
And dimly thro' the dust they saw her lead  
Her fluttering cavalcade as recklessly  
As might a queen of Araby, fleet-horsed,  
Skim o'er the level sands of Syria.  
So vanished. And the knights with one accord  
Put foot in stirrup, and, with puzzled minds  
And many-channeled marvelings, filed in  
The woody path, and fared them on and on  
Thro' denser glooms, and ways more intricate;  
Till, mystified at last and wholly lost,  
They made full halt, and would have turned them  
back  
But that a sudden voice brake on their ears  
All piteous and wailing, as distressed:  
And, following these cries, they sharply came  
Upon an open road that circled round  
A reedy flat and sodden tract of sedge,

Moated with stagnant water, crusted thick  
 With slimy moss, wherein were wriggling things  
 Entangled, and blind bubbles bulging up  
 And bursting where from middle way upshot  
 A tree-trunk, with its knarled and warty hands  
 As tho' upheld to clutch at sliding snakes  
 Or nip the wet wings of the dragon-fly.  
 Here gazing, lo! they saw their comrade, he  
 That had gone on with Raelus; and he  
 Was tugging to fling back into its place  
 A heavy log that once had spanned the pool  
 And made a footway to the sedgy flat  
 Whence came the bitter wailing cries they heard.  
 Then hastened they to join him in his task;  
 But, panting, as they asked of Raelus,  
 All winded with his work, yet jollier  
 Than meadow-lark at morn, he sent his voice  
 In such a twittering of merriment,  
 The wail of sorrow died and laughter strewed  
 Its grave with melody.

“O Raelus!

Rare Raelus!” he cried and clapped his hands,  
 And even in the weeds that edged the pool  
 Fell wrestling with his mirth.—“Why, Raelus,”  
 He said, when he at last could speak again,  
 “Drew magnet-like—you know that talk of his,—  
 And so, adhesive, did I cling, and cling  
 Until I found us in your far advance,  
 And, hidden in the wood, I stayed to say  
 ’Twas better we should bide your coming. ‘No.’  
 Then on again; and still a second time—

'Shall we not bide their coming?' 'No!' he said;  
And on again, until the third; and 'No—  
We'll push a little further.' As we did;  
And, sudden, came upon an open glade—  
There to the northward,—by a thicket bound:  
Then he dismounted, giving me his rein,  
And, charging me to keep myself concealed,  
And if he were not back a certain time  
To ride for you and search where he had gone,  
He crossed the opening and passed from sight  
Within the thicket. I was curious:  
And so, dismounting, tethered our two steeds  
And followed him; and, creeping warily,  
Came on him where—unseen of him—I saw  
Him pause before the cave himself described  
Before us yesternoon. And here he put  
His fingers to his lips and gave a call  
Bird-like and quavering: at which a face,  
As radiant as summer sun at morn,  
Parted the viny curtains of the cave;  
And then, a moment later, came in view  
A woman even fairer than my sight  
Might understand. 'What! dare you come again?'  
As, lifting up her eyes all flashingly,  
She scorched him with a look of hate.—'Begone!  
Or have you—traitor, villain, knave, and cur,—  
Bro't minions of the law to carry out  
The vengeance of your whimpering jealousy?'  
Then Raelus, all cowering before  
Her queenly anger, faltered: 'Hear me yet;  
I do not threaten. But your love—your love!—

O give me that. I know you pure as dew :  
Your love! Your love!—The smile that has gone  
out

And left my soul a midnight of despair!—  
Your love or life! For I have even now  
Your stronghold girt about with certain doom  
If you but waver in your choice.—Your love!  
At which, as quick as tho't, leapt on him there  
A strong man from the covert of the gloom ;  
And others, like to him, from here and there  
Came skurrying. I, turning, would have fled,  
But found myself as suddenly beset  
And tied and tumbled there with Raelus.  
And him they haltered by his squirming heels  
Until he did confess such villainy  
As made me wonder if his wits were sound—  
Confessed himself a renegade—a thief—  
Ay, even one of them, save that he knew  
Not that nice honor even thieves may claim  
Among themselves.—And so ran on thro' such  
A catalogue of littlenesses, I  
For deafest shame had even stopped my ears  
But that my wrists were lockt. And when he came  
To his confession of his lie at court,  
By which was gained our knightly sympathy  
And valiant service on this fools' crusade,  
I seemed to feel the redness of my blush  
Soak thro' my very soul. There I brake in :  
'Fair lady and most gallant,—to my shame  
Do I admit we have been duped by such  
An ingrate as this bundled lump of flesh

That I am helpless to rise up and spurn:  
Unbind me, and I promise such amends  
As knightly hands may deign to wreak upon  
A thing so vile as he.' Then, laughing, she:  
'First tell me, by your honor, where await  
Your knightly brothers and my enemies.'  
To which I answered, truthfully, I knew  
Not where you lingered, but not close at hand  
I was assured. Then all abrupt, she turned:  
'Get every one within! We ride at once!'  
And scarce a dozen minutes ere they came  
Outpouring from the cave in such a guise  
As made me smile from very wonderment.—  
From head to heel in woman's dress they came,  
Clad richly, too, and trapped and tricked withal  
As maidenly, but in the face and hand,  
As ever damsels flock at holiday.  
Then were their chargers bro't, caparisoned  
In keeping; and they mounted, lifting us,  
Still bounden, with much jest and mockery  
Of soft caress and wanton blandishments,  
As tho' they were of sex their dress declared.  
And so they carried us until they came  
Upon the road there as it nicks the copse;  
And so drew rein, dismounted, leaving some  
To guard their horses; hurried us across  
This footway to the middle of the flat.  
Here Raelus was bounden to a tree,  
Stript to the waist; my fetters cut, and then  
A long, keen switch put in my hand, and 'Strike!  
Strike as all duty bids you!' said the queen.

And so I did, with right good will at first ;  
Till, softened as I heard the wretch's prayers  
Of anguish, I at last withheld my hand,  
'What! tiring?' chirpt the queen: 'Give me the  
stick!'

And swish, and swish, and mercy how it rained!  
Then all the others, forming circlewise,  
Danced round and round the howling wretch,  
and jeered

And japed at him, and mocked and scoffed at him,  
And spat upon him. And I turned away  
And hid my face; then raised it pleadingly:  
Nor would they listen my appeal for him;  
But left him so, and thonged and took me back  
Across the mere, and drew the bridge, that none  
Might go to him, and carried me with them  
Far on their way, and freed me once again;  
And back I turned, tho' loath, to succor him."  
And even as he ceased they heard the wail  
Break out anew, and crossed without a word,  
And Raelus they found, and without word  
They loosed him. And he brake away and ran  
As runs a lie the truth is hard upon.

Thus did it fare with Raelus. And they  
Who knew of it said naught at court of it,  
Nor from that day spake ever of him once,  
Nor heard of him again, nor cared to hear.

## A MOTHER-SONG

MOTHER, O mother! forever I cry for you,  
Sing the old song I may never forget;  
Even in slumber I murmur and sigh for you.—  
Mother, O mother,  
Sing low, "Little brother,  
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! the years are so lonely,  
Filled but with weariness, doubt and regret!  
Can't you come back to me—for to-night only,  
Mother, my mother,  
And sing, "Little brother,  
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! of old I had never  
One wish denied me, nor trouble to fret;  
Now—must I cry out all vainly forever,—  
Mother, sweet mother,  
O sing, "Little brother,  
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! must longing and sorrow  
Leave me in darkness, with eyes ever wet,  
And never the hope of a meeting to-morrow?  
Answer me, mother,  
And sing, "Little brother,  
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

## THE LOST PATH

ALONE they walked—their fingers knit together,  
And swaying listlessly as might a swing  
Wherein Dan Cupid dangled in the weather  
Of some sun-flooded afternoon of Spring.

Within the clover-fields the tickled cricket  
Laughed lightly as they loitered down the lane,  
And from the covert of the hazel-thicket  
The squirrel peeped and laughed at them again.

The bumblebee that tipped the lily-vases  
Along the roadside in the shadows dim,  
Went following the blossoms of their faces  
As though their sweets must needs be shared with  
him.

Between the pasture bars the wondering cattle  
Stared wistfully, and from their mellow bells  
Shook out a welcoming whose dreamy rattle  
Fell swooningly away in faint farewells.

And though at last the gloom of night fell o'er them,  
And folded all the landscape from their eyes,  
They only knew the dusky path before them  
Was leading safely on to Paradise.



## MY BRIDE THAT IS TO BE

O SOUL of mine, look out and see  
My bride, my bride that is to be!—  
Reach out with mad, impatient hands,  
And draw aside futurity  
As one might draw a veil aside—  
And so unveil her where she stands  
Madonna-like and glorified—  
The queen of undiscovered lands  
Of love, to where she beckons me—  
My bride, my bride that is to be.

The shadow of a willow-tree  
That wavers on a garden-wall  
In summer-time may never fall  
In attitude as gracefully  
As my fair bride that is to be;—  
Nor ever Autumn's leaves of brown  
As lightly flutter to the lawn  
As fall her fairy-feet upon

The path of love she loiters down.—  
O'er drops of dew she walks, and yet  
Not one may stain her sandal wet—  
Ay, she might *dance* upon the way  
Nor crush a single drop to spray,  
So airy-like she seems to me,—  
My bride, my bride that is to be.

I know not if her eyes are light  
As summer skies or dark as night,—  
I only know that they are dim  
With mystery: In vain I peer  
To make their hidden meaning clear,  
While o'er their surface, like a tear  
That ripples to the silken brim,  
A look of longing seems to swim  
All worn and weary-like to me;  
And then, as suddenly, my sight  
Is blinded with a smile so bright,  
Through folded lids I still may see  
My bride, my bride that is to be.

Her face is like a night of June  
Upon whose brow the crescent-moon  
Hangs pendent in a diadem  
Of stars, with envy lighting them.—  
And, like a wild cascade, her hair  
Floods neck and shoulder, arm and wrist,  
Till only through a gleaming mist  
I seem to see a Siren there,

With lips of love and melody  
 And open arms and heaving breast  
 Wherein I fling myself to rest,  
 The while my heart cries hopelessly  
 For my fair bride that is to be.

. . . . .

Nay, foolish heart and blinded eyes!  
 My bride hath need of no disguise.—  
 But, rather, let her come to me  
 In such a form as bent above  
 My pillow when, in infancy,  
 I knew not anything but love.—  
 O let her come from out the lands  
 Of Womanhood—not fairy isles,—  
 And let her come with Woman's hands  
 And Woman's eyes of tears and smiles,—  
 With Woman's hopefulness and grace  
 Of patience lighting up her face:  
 And let her diadem be wrought  
 Of kindly deed and prayerful thought,  
 That ever over all distress  
 May beam the light of cheerfulness.—  
 And let her feet be brave to fare  
 The labyrinths of doubt and care,  
 That, following, my own may find  
 The path to Heaven God designed.—  
 O let her come like this to me—  
 My bride—my bride that is to be.

## LULLABY

THE maple strews the embers of its leaves  
O'er the laggard swallows nestled 'neath the  
eaves;  
And the moody cricket falters in his cry—Baby-  
bye!—  
And the lid of night is falling o'er the sky—Baby-  
bye!—  
The lid of night is falling o'er the sky!

The rose is lying pallid, and the cup  
Of the frosted calla-lily folded up;  
And the breezes through the garden sob and sigh—  
Baby-bye!—  
O'er the sleeping blooms of Summer where they  
lie—Baby-bye!—  
O'er the sleeping blooms of summer where they  
lie!

Yet, Baby—O my Baby, for your sake  
This heart of mine is ever wide awake,  
And my love may never droop a drowsy eye—  
Baby-bye!—  
Till your own are wet above me when I die—  
Baby-bye!—  
Till your own are wet above me when I die.

## THE ROMAUNT OF KING MORDAMEER

HO! did ye hear of Mordameer,  
The King of Slumberland!  
A lotus-crown upon his brow—  
A poppy in his hand,  
And all the elves that people dreams  
To bow at his command.

His throne is wrought of blackest night,  
Enriched with rare designs  
Wherein the blazing comet runs  
And writhes and wreaths and twines  
About a crescent angel-face  
That ever smiling shines.

The dais is of woven rays  
Of starlight fringed with shade,  
And jeweled o'er with gems of dew,  
And dyed and interlaid  
With every gleaming tint and hue  
Of which the flowers are made.

And when the day has died away  
In darkness o'er the land,  
The King bends down his dusky face  
And takes the sleeper's hand,  
And lightly o'er his folded eyes  
He waves his magic wand.

And lo! within his princely home,  
Upon his downy bed,  
With soft and silken coverlets  
And curtains round him spread,  
The rich man rolls in troubled sleep;  
And moans in restless dread:

His eyes are closed, yet Mordameer  
May see their stony stare  
As plainly fixed in agony  
As though the orbs were bare  
And glaring at the wizard throng  
That fills the empty air:—

A thousand shapes, with phantom japes,  
Dance o'er the sleeper's sight,—  
With fingers bony-like and lean,  
And faces pinched and white,  
And withered cheeks, and sunken eyes  
With ever-ravening sight.

And such the dreams that Mordameer  
Brings to the child of Pride,—  
The worn and wasted forms that he

Hath stinted and denied—  
 Of those who filled his coffers up  
 And empty-handed died.

And then again he waves his wand:  
 And from his lair of straw  
 The felon, with his fettered limbs,  
 Starts up with fear and awe,  
 And stares with starting eyes upon  
 A vision of the law:

A grim procession passes by,  
 The while he glares in fear—  
 With faces, from a wanton's smile  
 Down to a demon's leer,—  
 The woman marching at the front,  
 The hangman at the rear.

All ways are clear to Mordameer:  
 The ocean knows his tread;  
 His feet are free on land or sea:—  
 Above the sailor's head  
 He hangs a dream of home, and bends  
 Above his cottage-bed:

And, nestled in the mother's arms,  
 A child, surpassing fair,  
 In slumber lies, its tiny hands  
 Entangled in her hair,  
 And round its face a smile that moves  
 Its lips as though in prayer.

And lo! the good king feasts its eyes  
With fruits from foreign shores,  
And pink-lipped shells that ever mock  
The ocean as it roars;  
And in the mother's arms he folds  
The form that she adores.

Through all the hovels of the poor  
He steals with noiseless tread,  
And presses kisses o'er and o'er  
Where sorrow's tears are shed,  
Till old caresses live once more  
That are forever dead.

Above the soldier in his tent  
Are glorious battles fought;  
And o'er the prince's velvet couch,  
And o'er the peasant's cot,  
And o'er the pallet of disease  
His wondrous spells are wrought.

He bends him o'er the artist's cot,  
And fills his dazzled mind  
With airy forms that float about  
Like clouds in summer wind,  
O'er landscapes that the angels wrought  
And God Himself designed.

And drifting through the poet's dreams  
The seraph trails her wings,  
And fills the chancels of his soul



With heavenly whisperings,  
Till, swooning with delight, he hears  
The song he never sings.

He walks the wide world's every way,  
This monarch grand and grim;  
All paths that reach the human heart,  
However faint and dim,  
He journeys, for the darkest night  
Is light as day to him.

And thus the lordly Mordameer  
Rules o'er his mystic realm,  
With gems from out the star's red core  
To light his diadem,  
And kings and emperors to kneel  
And kiss his garment's hem.

For once, upon a night of dreams,  
Adown the aisles of space  
I strayed so far that I forgot  
Mine own abiding-place,  
And wandered into Slumberland,  
And met him face to face.

## DEARTH

**I** HOLD your trembling hand to-night—and  
yet

I may not know what wealth of bliss is mine,  
My heart is such a curious design  
Of trust and jealousy! Your eyes are wet—  
So must I think they jewel some regret,—  
And lo, the loving arms that round me twine  
Cling only as the tendrils of a vine  
Whose fruit has long been gathered: I forget,  
While crimson clusters of your kisses press  
Their wine out on my lips, my royal fare  
Of rapture, since blind fancy needs must guess  
They once poured out their sweetness other-  
where,  
With fuller flavoring of happiness  
Than e'en your broken sobs may now  
declare.

## THE SONG I NEVER SING

AS when in dreams we sometimes hear  
A melody so faint and fine  
And musically sweet and clear,  
It flavors all the atmosphere  
With harmony divine,—  
So, often in my waking dreams,  
I hear a melody that seems  
Like fairy voices whispering  
To me the song I never sing.

Sometimes when brooding o'er the years  
My lavish youth has thrown away—  
When all the glowing past appears  
But as a mirage that my tears  
Have crumbled to decay,—  
I thrill to find the ache and pain  
Of my remorse is stilled again,  
As, forward bent and listening,  
I hear the song I never sing.

A murmuring of rhythmic words,  
Adrift on tunes whose currents flow  
Melodious with the trill of birds,  
And far-off lowing of the herds  
In lands of long ago;  
And every sound the truant loves  
Comes to me like the coo of doves  
When first in blooming fields of Spring  
I heard the song I never sing.

The echoes of old voices, wound  
In limpid streams of laughter where  
The river Time runs bubble-crowned,  
And giddy eddies ripple round  
The lilies growing there;  
Where roses, bending o'er the brink,  
Drain their own kisses as they drink,  
And ivies climb and twine and cling  
About the song I never sing.

An ocean-surge of sound that falls  
As though a tide of heavenly art  
Had tempested the gleaming halls  
And crested o'er the golden walls  
In showers on my heart. . . .  
Thus—thus, with open arms and eyes  
Uplifted toward the alien skies,  
Forgetting every earthly thing,  
I hear the song I never sing.

O nameless lay, sing clear and strong,  
Pour down thy melody divine  
Till purifying floods of song  
Have washed away the stains of wrong  
That dim this soul of mine!  
O woo me near and nearer thee,  
Till my glad lips may catch the key,  
And, with a voice unwavering,  
Join in the song I never sing.

## UNSPOKEN

O HE can hold her hand, and full and fair  
Look in her face and fling her smile for  
smile,

And loosen from his lips such words the while  
As make him wonder how his tongue may dare  
Such dalliance. And when in wordless prayer

His heart lies gasping, he can reconcile  
His talk to that glib, recitative style  
The silly gossip chatters everywhere.

But O, one utterance—one stormy word

Is fastened down in silence pitiless;  
No struggling murmur of it ever heard—

No echo welling out of his distress  
To plead aloud its mission long deferred,  
And leap up fountain-like in thankfulness.

Yet he is bold enough in dreams—last night

He held her in his arms, and in the strands  
Of her down-streaming hair he bathed his  
hands,

And fretted it in golden foam, as bright  
And billowy it floated o'er his sight.

Her breath was like a breeze of fairy-lands  
That reels above a bed of bloom and fans

Its fragrant life away in sheer delight.  
So even did he whisper through the sighs  
    That quavered as his spirit stayed to drain  
The mad intoxication of her eyes;  
    Then felt a pang of pleasure keen as pain—  
A barb of ecstasy, shot arrow-wise,  
    In such a kiss as cleft his heart in twain.

But waking, when the morning of her face  
    Shines full upon him, voiceless has he grown,  
    Save that inanimately mirthful tone  
That ripples ever on its foolish race  
And finds nor rest nor joyance in the chase.  
    And so it is a never-ending moan  
    Wails on unheard, unheeded and unknown  
But by the echoes of its hiding-place.  
What poverty like this?—to laugh, and sing,  
    And babble like a brook in summer-time;  
To circle o'er the world on airy wing,  
    Or clamber into Heaven on rounds of rhyme,  
When in the soul, forever lingering,  
    There lives a love unspeakably sublime.

## THANKSGIVING DAY AT HUNCHLEY'S

IF you never heard of Hunchley, I would say in  
his behalf,  
He's as jovial a bachelor as ever raised a laugh,  
And as fond of boon companions, yet withal as tried  
and true  
A gentleman of honor as the writer ever knew.

And if he has a weakness, as a weakness it depends  
On a certain strength of kindness he bestows upon  
his friends ;  
Being simple, undesigning, and of courteous  
address,  
All hearts are open to him and his friends are  
numberless.

And this is how it happened some discrepancies  
befell  
At the late Thanksgiving dinner which began at his  
hotel,  
Where, it seems, the guests invited were selected  
more to be  
In keeping with his bounty than the laws of  
harmony.



For there among the number were two rivals of the  
press,  
Who had paragraphed each other with prolonged  
maliciousness,  
And in their respective columns had a thousand  
times declared  
That the other fellow "daresn't," when the other  
fellow dared.

And cheek by jowl together were two members of  
the bar,  
Politically, legally, and socially at war,  
Who denounced each other daily, and in every  
local phrase  
That could make the matter binding all the balance  
of their days.

Of the medical fraternity ("fraternity" is good)  
There were four or five disciples of the healing  
brotherhood—  
Botanic and eclectic, and some others that persist  
In orthographic wranglings, such as "homeopa-  
thist";

And an ordinary actor, and an actor of renown,  
Whose cue, it seemed, for smiling was the other  
actor's frown;  
And the most loquacious author my remembrance  
can recall,  
And a little bench-leg poet that couldn't talk at all.

In fact the guests assembled, as they gathered round  
the feast

Wore expressions such as savored not of thankful-  
ness the least,

And to a close observer were suggestive of the  
dread

And shadowy disaster that was hanging overhead.

Now the simple Mr. Hunchley had invited, with the  
rest,

A melancholy pastor, and, in honor of the guest  
And the notable occasion, he desired a special  
"grace,"

Which the thankful pastor offered with a very  
thankless face.

And at this unhappy juncture came a journalistic  
pun,

Which the rival designated as a most atrocious one,  
At which the grim projector, with a covert look of  
hate,

Shook a little dust of "fine-cut" in the other fellow's  
plate.

And the viands circulated, with a sudden gust of wit  
From a lawyer—instituted for the other's benefit,—  
Then the victim spun a story with exasperating  
mirth

That reflected his opponent as of small judicial  
worth.

Then a medical discussion on the stomach swelled  
the gale  
And the literary appetite began to droop and fail;  
While a sportive reminiscence from the absented-  
minded host  
Blanched the features of the pastor to the pallor of  
a ghost.

And a deep sonorous murmur slowly grew, and  
grew, and grew  
Till the similes that suited it were singularly few,—  
For even now at leisure, and with nothing else to do,  
A task of lesser promise I can say I never knew.

I have heard the tread of armies as they marched  
upon the foe,  
And, among the Alps, have listened to the avalanche  
of snow;  
I have leaned upon Niagara, and heard the wailing  
tide  
Where it leaps its awful chasm in unending suicide:

I have heard the trampling footsteps of the roaring  
hurricane  
As he lashed his tail of lightning, and tossed his  
shaggy mane;  
I have heard the cannonading of the devastating  
storm,  
And the falling politician howling loudly for  
reform:

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But no mystic voice of terror ever bred of Nature's  
law  
Could awake the sense of wonder and dismay, and  
doubt and awe  
That thrilled my inmost being as the conversation  
swelled  
To a mad, chaotic focus in which everybody yelled.

There's a vision in my fancy, misty-like and  
undefined,  
Of an actor with his collar loose and sticking up  
behind,  
And another (though I hesitate to chronicle the  
fact)  
Writhing underneath the table in a wild contortion  
act.

There's a shadowy remembrance of a group of three  
or four  
Who were seemingly dissecting another on the  
floor;  
And the form of Mr. Hunchley dancing round a  
couple more,  
And a phantom with a chicken-leg a-breaking for  
the door.

And here my memory wavers—I recall the heated  
breath  
Of the gentleman who held me with the very grip  
of death,

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And as my reeling pencil scrawls the scene of my  
release  
I'm as full of glad thanksgiving as my soul is full of  
peace.

But this is how it happened these discrepancies  
befell  
At the late Thanksgiving dinner Hunchley gave at  
his hotel,  
Where, it seems, the guests invited were selected  
more to be  
In keeping with his bounty than the laws of  
harmony.

## APART

### I

THEY stood on either side the gate—  
Though fastened with the hands of fate  
A touch might lift the latch's weight.

The moonlight, with a faded grace,  
Fell o'er the whiteness of her face  
Like some soiled veil of bridal lace.

The fan she held went fluttering  
About her mouth on restless wing  
As though it were a wounded thing.

And in her breast an ache of dread  
Held back the word she would have said,  
And sent a weary sigh instead.

### II

He waited, with his eager eyes  
Half muffled in a weak disguise  
Of carelessness and cold surprise.

Within his breast he heard the moan :  
"How desolate and all alone,  
And pitiless my heart has grown!"

And yet a nameless ache of dread  
Held back the word he would have said,  
And sent a weary sigh instead.

The long, black shadows of the trees  
Whose branches wavered in the breeze,  
Fell o'er them like their destinies.

They parted. Yet the wild wind saith  
That two fair ghosts with failing breath  
Walk hand in hand the path of death.

## TOIL

HE had toiled away for a weary while,  
Through day's dull glare and night's deep  
gloom ;

And many a long and lonesome mile  
He had paced in the round of his dismal room ;  
He had fared on hunger—had drunk of pain  
As the drouthy earth might drink of rain ;  
And the brow he leaned in his trembling palm  
Throbbled with a misery so intense  
That never again did it seem that calm  
Might come to him with the gracious balm  
Of old-time languor and indolence.

And he said, "I will leave the tale half told,  
And leave the song for the winds to sing ;  
And the pen—that pitiless blade of gold  
That stabs my heart like a dagger-sting—  
I will drive to the hilt through the inkstand's  
top

And spill its blood to the last black drop !"  
Then he masked his voice with a laugh, and  
went



Out in the world with a lawless grace—  
 With a brazen lie in his eyes and face  
 Told in a smile of glad content :  
 He roved the round of pleasures through,  
 And tasted each as it pleased him to ;  
 He joined old songs, and the clink and din  
 Of the revelers at the banquet hall ;  
 And he tripped his feet where the violin  
 Spun its waltz for the carnival ;  
 He looked, bedazed, on the luring wile  
 And the siren-light of a woman's smile,  
 And peered in her eyes as a diver might  
 Peer in the sea ere he leaps outright,—  
 Caught his breath, with a glance above,  
 And dropped full-length in the depths of love

. . . . .

'Tis well if ever the false lights die  
 On the alien coasts where our wreck'd hopes  
 lie !

'Tis well to feel, through the blinding rain,  
 Our outflung hands touch earth again !  
 So the castaway came, safe from doom,  
 Back at last to his lonely room,  
 Filled with its treasure of work to do  
 And radiant with the light and bloom  
 Of the summer sun and his glad soul, too !  
 And sweet as ever the song of birds,  
 Over his work he sang these words :—

"O friends are good, with their princely ways,  
And royal hearts they are goodly things;  
And fellowship, in the long dark days  
When the drear soul cowers with drooping  
wings,

Is a thing to yearn for.—*Mirth* is good,—  
For a ringing laugh is a rhythmic cry  
Blown like a hail from the Angelhood  
To the barque of the lone soul drifting by.—  
Goodly, too, is a mute caress  
Of woman's hands and their tenderness—  
The warm breath wet with the dews of love—  
The vine-like arms, and the fruit thereof—  
The touch that thrills, and the kiss that melts,—  
But Toil is sweeter than all things else."

## HIS ROOM

I'M home again, my dear old Room,  
I'm home again, and happy, too,  
As, peering through the brightening gloom,  
I find myself alone with you:  
    Though brief my stay, nor far away,  
    I missed you—missed you night and day—  
    As wildly yearned for you as now.—  
    Old Room, how are you, anyhow?

My easy chair, with open arms,  
    Awaits me just within the door;  
The littered carpet's woven charms  
    Have never seemed so bright before,—  
    The old rosettes and mignonettes  
    And ivy-leaves and violets,  
    Look up as pure and fresh of hue  
    As though baptized in morning-dew.

Old Room, to me your homely walls  
    Fold round me like the arms of love,  
And over all my being falls  
    A blessing pure as from above—

Even as a nestling child caressed  
And lulled upon a loving breast,  
With folded eyes, too glad to weep  
And yet too sad for dreams or sleep.

You've been so kind to me, old Room—  
So patient in your tender care,  
My drooping heart in fullest bloom  
Has blossomed for you unaware;  
And who but you had cared to woo  
A heart so dark, and heavy too,  
As in the past you lifted mine  
From out the shadow to the shine?

For I was but a wayward boy  
When first you gladly welcomed me  
And taught me work was truer joy  
Than rioting incessantly:  
And thus the din that stormed within  
The old guitar and violin  
Has fallen in a fainter tone  
And sweeter, for your sake alone.

Though in my absence I have stood  
In festal halls a favored guest,  
I missed, in this old quietude,  
My worthy work and worthy rest—  
By *this* I know that long ago  
You loved me first, and told me so  
In art's mute eloquence of speech  
The voice of praise may never reach.

For lips and eyes in truth's disguise  
Confuse the faces of my friends,  
Till old affection's fondest ties  
I find unraveling at the ends;  
But, as I turn to you, and learn  
To meet my griefs with less concern.  
Your love seems all I have to keep  
Me smiling lest I needs must weep.

Yet I am happy, and would fain  
Forget the world and all its woes;  
So set me to my tasks again,  
Old Room, and lull me to repose:  
And as we glide adown the tide  
Of dreams, forever side by side,  
I'll hold your hands as lovers do  
Their sweethearts' and talk love to you.

## TO LEONAINIE

*In memory of Leonainie, infant daughter of W. B.  
and Lotta Titus, these lines are tenderly in-  
scribed.*

“LEONAINIE!” angels missed her—  
L Baby angels—they  
Who behind the stars had kissed her  
E’er she came away ;  
And their little, wandering faces  
Drooped o’er Heaven’s hiding-places  
Whiter than the lily-vases  
On the Sabbath day.

“Leonainie!” crying, crying,  
Crying through the night,  
Till her lisping lips replying,  
Laughing with delight,  
Drew us nearer yet, and nearer  
That we might the better hear her  
Baby-words, and love her dearer  
Hearing not aright.

Only spake the little lisper  
In the Angel-tongue,  
Fainter than a fairy-whisper  
Murmured in among  
Dewy blossoms covered over  
With the fragrant tufts of clover,  
Where the minstrel honey-rover  
Twanged his wings and sung.

“Leonainie!”—And the glimmer  
Of her starry eyes  
Faded, and the world grew dimmer  
E’en as Paradise  
Blossomed with a glory brighter  
Than the waning stars, and whiter  
Than the dying moon, and lighter  
Than the morning skies.

## THE SHOWER

THE landscape, like the awed face of a child  
Grew curiously blurred; a hush of death  
Fell on the fields, and in the darkened wild  
The zephyr held its breath.

No wavering glamour-work of light and shade  
Dappled the shivering surface of the brook;  
The frightened ripples in their ambuscade  
Of willows trilled and shook.

The sullen day grew darker, and anon  
Dim flashes of pent anger lit the sky;  
With rumbling wheels of wrath came rolling on  
The storm's artillery.

The cloud above put on its blackest frown,  
And then, as with a vengeful cry of pain,  
The lightning snatched it, ripped and flung it  
down  
In raveled shreds of rain:

While I, transfigured by some wondrous art,  
Bowed with the thirsty lilies to the sod,  
My empty soul brimmed over, and my heart  
Drenched with the love of God.



## YE SCHOLAR

**H**O! ho! Ye Scholar recketh not how lean  
His lank frame waxeth in ye hectic  
gloom

That smeareth o'er ye dim walls of his room  
His wavering shadow! Shut is he, I ween,  
Like as a withered nosegay, in between

Ye musty, mildewed leaves of some volume  
Of ancient lore ye moth and he consume  
In jointure. Yet a something in his mien

Forbids all mockery, though quaint is he,  
And eke fantastical in form and face

As that Old Knight ye Tale of Chivalry  
Made mad immortally, yet spared ye grace  
Of some rare virtue which we sigh to see,  
And pour our laughter out most tenderly.

## DEATH IS DEAD

AND did you know our old friend Death is dead?

Ah me! he died last night; my ghost was there,

And all his phantom-friends from everywhere  
Were sorrowfully grouped about his bed.

"I die; God help the living now!" he said

With such a ghastly pathos, I declare

The tears oozed from the blind eyes of the air  
And spattered on his face in gouts of red.

And then he smiled—the dear old bony smile

That glittered on us in that crazy whim  
When first our daring feet leapt the defile

Of life and ran so eagerly to him:

And so he smiled upon us, even while

The kind old sockets grew forever dim.

## TOM JOHNSON'S QUIT

A PASSEL o' the boys last night—  
An' me amongst 'em—kind o' got  
To talkin' Temper'nce left an' right,  
An' workin' up "blue-ribbon," *hot*;  
An' while we was a-countin' jes'  
How many hed gone into hit  
An' signed the pledge, some feller says,—  
"Tom Johnson's quit!"

We laughed, of course—'cause Tom, you know,  
Has spiled more whisky, boy an' man,  
And seed more trouble, high an' low,  
Than any chap but Tom could stand:  
And so, says I, "*He's* too nigh dead  
Fer Temper'nce to benefit!"  
The feller sighed ag'in, and said—  
"Tom Johnson's quit!"

We all *liked* Tom, an' that was why  
We sort o' simmered down ag'in,  
And ast the feller ser'ously  
Ef he wa'n't tryin' to draw us in:

He shuck his head—tuck off his hat—  
Helt up his hand an' opened hit,  
An' says, says he, "I'll *swear* to that—  
Tom Johnson's quit!"

Well, we was stumpt, an' tickled, too,—  
Because we knowed ef Tom *hed* signed  
There wa'n't no man 'at wore the "blue"  
'At was more honeste inclined:  
An' then and there we kind o' riz,—  
The hull dern gang of us 'at bit—  
An' th'owed our hats and let 'er whiz,—  
"Tom Johnson's quit!"

I've heerd 'em holler when the balls  
Was buzzin' 'round us wus'n bees,  
An' when the ole flag on the walls  
Was flappin' o'er the enemy's,  
I've heerd a-many a wild "hooray"  
'At made my heart git up an' git—  
But Lord!—to hear 'em shout that way!—  
"Tom Johnson's quit!"

But when we saw the chap 'at fetched  
The news wa'n't jinin' in the cheer,  
But stood there solemn-like, an' reched  
An' kind o' wiped away a tear,  
We someway sort o' stilled ag'in,  
And listened—I kin hear him yit,  
His voice a-wobblin' with his chin,—  
"Tom Johnson's quit—

"I hain't a-givin' you no game—  
I wisht I was! . . . An hour ago,  
This operator—what's his name—  
The one 'at works at night, you know?—  
Went out to flag that Ten Express,  
And sees a man in front of hit  
Th'ow up his hands an' stagger—yes,—  
*Tom Johnson's quit!*"

## THE LITTLE DEAD MAN

YET NOT SO DEAD AS ANOTHER

### I

**I**T was a little dead man,  
At peace with all the earth;  
Yet I never saw a dead man  
So seeming near to mirth.

His hands were meekly hidden,  
At his very last request—  
The right in his hip pocket,  
And the other in his vest.

His collar was thrown open,  
And he wore his easy clothes—  
Had his ordinary boots on,  
With rosin on the toes.

## II

'And so the little dead man  
Lay coffined for the tomb.  
The hearse was at the doorway—  
The mourners in the room—

When suddenly a stranger,  
Who had called the day before  
With a book beneath his elbow,  
Entered softly at the door,

And stood before the mourners  
In his bold and brazen might,  
A note-book in the left hand  
And a pencil in the right.

And he turned him to the mourners  
With a business air, and said:  
"I must really beg your pardon,  
But the gentleman that's dead

"Was kind enough to tell me,  
If I'd call around to-day  
He'd be prepared to listen  
To all I had to say.

"And in view of that engagement,  
I would gently intimate  
[As it may pitch the funeral  
Some dozen hours late,)

"That you have my indulgence,"  
And with eyelids downward thrown,  
They left the little dead man  
And the agent all alone.

As only stars may lighten  
Up the grandeur of the plains,  
And the mountains where the midnight  
In her mystic beauty reigns,

So the stars must shed their glory  
O'er imagination's vales,  
And illuminate the story  
Where the poet's pencil fails.

\* \* \* \* \*

But there was a little dead man—  
Ah! so very dead indeed,  
They fastened down his coffin lid  
With most judicious speed.

And they whose latest office  
Was to shroud his form from sight,  
Saw a note-book in the left hand,  
And a pencil in the right.



## OLD-FASHIONED ROSES

THEY ain't no style about 'em,  
And they're sort o' pale and faded  
Yit the doorway here, without 'em,  
Would be lonesomer, and shaded  
With a good 'eal blacker shadder  
Than the morning-glories makes,  
And the sunshine would look sadder  
Fer their good old-fashion' sakes.

I like 'em 'cause they kind o'  
Sort o' *make* a feller like 'em!  
And I tell you, when I find a  
Bunch out whur the sun kin strike 'em,  
It allus sets me thinkin'  
O' the ones 'at used to grow  
And peek in through the chinkin'  
O' the cabin, don't you know!

And then I think o' mother,  
And how she ust to love 'em—  
When they wuzn't any other,  
'Less she found 'em up above 'em!

And her eyes, afore she shut 'em,  
 Whispered with a smile and said  
 We must pick a bunch and putt 'em  
 In her hand when she wuz dead.

But, as I wuz a-sayin',  
 They ain't no style about 'em  
 Very gaudy er displayin',  
 But I wouldn't be without 'em,—  
 'Cause I'm happier in these posies,  
 And hollyhawks and sich,  
 Than the hummin'-bird 'at noses  
 In the roses of the rich.

## THE EMPTY SONG

“WHAT have we but an empty song?”  
Said the minstrel, as he bent  
To stay the fingers that trailed along  
The strings of her instrument.

“The clasp of your hand is warm in mine,  
And your breath on my brow is wet—  
I have drunk of your lips as men drink wine,  
But my heart is thirsty yet.”

The starlight shivered a little space,  
And the sigh of the wind uprose  
And blew a cloud o'er the moon's wan face,  
And swooned back in repose.

. . . . .

The years ooze on in a stagnant flood:  
One drifts as the winds allow;  
And one writes rhymes with his heart's own  
blood,  
But his soul is thirsty now.

## A ROSE IN OCTOBER

AN IMITATION OF MAGAZINE POETRY

### I

I STRAYED, all alone, where the Autumn  
Had swept, in her petulant wrath :  
All the flowers, that had bloomed in the garden,  
She had gathered, and flung in her path.  
And I saw the dead face of the lily,  
Struck down, by the rain and the sleet,  
And the pink, with her lashes yet weeping,  
Drooped low in the dust, at my feet.

### II

The leaves on the branches still swinging,  
Were blanched with the crimson of death ;  
And the vines that still clung to the trellis,  
Were palsied, and shook at a breath.  
And I sighed : "So hath fate, like the Autumn,  
Swept over my path, till I see,  
'As I walk through life's desolate garden  
Not a rose is left blooming for me!"

## III

“Heigho!” said a voice of low laughter—  
“How blind are you poets!” And there,  
At the gate, just in front of me, leaning,  
Stood Rosalind May, I declare!  
I stammered, confused, for the moment;  
But was blest for the rest of my life,  
For my Rose of October there promised  
She’d bloom for me aye, as—my wife.

## ROMANCIN'

I'B'EN a-kindo' "*musin'*," as the feller says, and  
I'm  
About o' the conclusion that they hain't no better  
time,  
When you come to cipher on it, than the times we  
ust to know  
When we swore our first "*dog-gone-it*" sorto'  
solum-like and low!

You git my idy, do you?—*Little* tads, you under-  
stand—  
Jest a-wishin' thue and thue you that you on'y wuz  
a *man*.—  
Yit here I am, this minit, even sixty, to a day,  
And fergittin' all that's in it, wishin' jest the other  
way!

I hain't no hand to lectur' on the times, er *dim-*  
*onstrate*  
Whare the trouble is, er hector and domineer with  
Fate,—

But when I git so flurried, and so pestered-like and  
blue,  
And so rail owdacious worried, let me tell you what  
I do!—

I jest gee-haw the hosses, and onhook the swingle-  
tree,  
Whare the hazel-bushes tosses down theyr shadders  
over me;  
And I draw my plug o' navy, and I climb the fence,  
and set  
Jest a-thinkin' here, i gravy! tel my eyes is wringin'-  
wet!

Tho' I still kin see the trouble o' the *presunt*, I kin  
see—  
Kindo' like my sight wuz double—all the things  
that *ust* to be;  
And the flutter o' the robin and the teeter o' the  
wren  
Sets the willer-branches bobbin' "howdy-do" thum  
*Now to Then!*

The deadnin' and the thicket's jest a-bilin' full of  
June,  
Thum the rattle o' the cricket, to the yellar-  
hammer's tune;  
And the catbird in the bottom, and the sapsuck on  
the snag,  
Seems ef they can't—od-rot 'em!— jest do nothin'  
else but brag!



"They hain't no better time . . . than the times we ust to know"





They's music in the twitter of the bluebird and the  
jay,  
And that sassy little critter jest a-*peckin'* all the  
day;  
They's music in the "flicker," and they's music in  
the thrush,  
And they's music in the snicker o' the chipmunk in  
the brush!

They's music *all around* me!—And I go back, in a  
dream  
Sweeter'yit than ever found me fast asleep,—and in  
the stream  
That ust to split the medder whare the dandylions  
growed,  
I stand knee-deep, and redder than the sunset down  
the road.

Then's when I' b'en a-fishin'!—And they's other  
fellers, too,  
With theyr hick'ry-poles a-swishin' out behind 'em;  
and a few  
Little "shiners" on our stringers, with theyr tails  
tiptoein' bloom,  
As we dance 'em in our fingers all the happy journey  
home.

I kin see us, true to Natur', thum the time we  
started out,  
With a biscuit and a 'tater in our little "round-  
about"!—

I kin see our lines a-tanglin', and our elbows in a  
jam,  
And our naked legs a-danglin' thum the apern o'  
the dam.

I kin see the honeysuckle climbin' up around the  
mill,  
And kin hear the worter chuckle, and the wheel  
a-growlin' still;  
And thum the bank below it I kin steal the old  
canoe,  
And jest git in and row it like the miller ust to do.

W'y, I git my fancy focused on the past so mortul  
plane  
I kin even smell the locus'-blossoms bloomin' in the  
lane;  
And I hear the cow-bells clinkin' sweeter tunes 'n  
"Money-musk"  
Fer the lightnin'-bugs a-blinkin' and a-dancin' in the  
dusk.

And when I've kep' on "musin'," as the feller says,  
tel I'm  
Firm-fixed in the conclusion that they hain't no  
better time,  
When you come to cipher on it, than the *old*  
times,—I de-clare  
I kin wake and say "dog-gone-it!" jest as soft as  
any prayer!

THE LITTLE OLD POEM THAT NOBODY  
READS

THE little old poem that nobody reads  
    Blooms in a crowded space,  
Like a ground-vine blossom, so low in the weeds  
    That nobody sees its face—  
    Unless, perchance, the reader's eye  
    Stares through a yawn, and hurries by,  
    For no one wants, or loves, or heeds  
    The little old poem that nobody reads.

The little old poem that nobody reads  
    Was written—where?—and when?  
Maybe a hand of goodly deeds  
    Thrilled as it held the pen:  
    Maybe the fountain whence it came  
    Was a heart brimmed o'er with tears of shame,  
    And maybe its creed is the worst of creeds—  
    The little old poem that nobody reads.

But, little old poem that nobody reads,  
    Holding you here above  
The wound of a heart that warmly bleeds  
    For all that knows not love,  
    I well believe if the old World knew  
    As dear a friend as I find in you,  
    That friend would tell it that all it needs  
    Is the little old poem that nobody reads.

## A SLEEPING BEAUTY

### I

AN alien wind that blew and blew  
Over the fields where the ripe grain grew,

Sending ripples of shine and shade  
That crept and crouched at her feet and played.

The sea-like summer washed the moss  
Till the sun-drenched lilies hung like floss,

Draping the throne of green and gold  
That lulled her there like a queen of old.

### II

Was it the hum of a bumblebee,  
Or the long-hushed bugle eerily

Winding a call to the daring Prince  
Lost in the wood long ages since?—

A dim old wood, with a palace rare  
Hidden away in its depths somewhere!

Was it the Princess, tranced in sleep,  
Awaiting her lover's touch to leap

Into the arms that bent above?—  
To thaw his heart with the breath of love—

And cloy his lips, through her waking tears,  
With the dead-ripe kiss of a hundred years!

## III

An alien wind that blew and blew.—  
I had blurred my eyes as the artists do,

Coaxing life to a half-sketched face,  
Or dreaming bloom for a grassy place.

The bee droned on in an undertone;  
And a shadow-bird trailed all alone

Across the wheat, while a liquid cry  
Dripped from above, as it went by.

What to her was the far-off whir  
Of the quail's quick wing or the chipmunk's  
chirr?—

What to her was the shade that slid  
Over the hill where the reapers hid?—

Or what the hunter, with one foot raised,  
As he turned to go—yet, pausing, gazed?

## LEEDLE DUTCH BABY

**L**EEDLE Dutch baby haff come ter town!  
Jabber und jump till der day gone down—  
Jabber und splutter und split hees jaws—  
Vot a Dutch baby dees Londsmon vas!  
I dink dose mout' vas leedle too vide  
Ober he laugh fon dot also-side!  
Haff got blenty off deemple und vrown?—  
Hey! leedle Dutchman come ter town!

Leedle Dutch baby, I dink me proud  
Ober your fader can schquall dot loud  
Ven he vas leedle Dutch baby like you  
Und yoost don't gare, like he always do!—  
Guess ven dey vean him on beer, you bet  
Dot's der because dot he aind veaned yet!—  
Vot you said off he dringk you down?—  
Hey! leedle Dutchman come ter town!

Leedle Dutch baby, yoost schquall away—  
Schquall fon preakfast till gisterday!  
Better you all time gry und shout  
Dan shmile me vonce fon der coffin out!  
Vot I gare off you keek my nose  
Downside-up mit your heels und toes—  
Downside, oder der oopside-down?—  
Hey! leedle Dutchman come ter town!

## LINES

ON HEARING A COW BAWL IN A DEEP FIT OF  
DEJECTION ON THE EVENING OF JULY 3,  
A. D. 1879

PORTENTOUS sound! mysteriously vast  
And awful in the grandeur of refrain  
That lifts the listener's hair as it swells past,  
And pours in turbid currents down the lane.

The small boy at the wood-pile, in a dream  
Slow trails the meat-rind o'er the listless  
saw;  
The chickens roosting o'er him on the beam  
Uplift their drowsy heads with cootered  
awe.

The "gung-oigh!" of the pump is strangely  
stilled:  
The smoke-house door bangs once em-  
phatic'ly,  
Then bangs no more, but leaves the silence  
filled  
With one lorn plaint's despotic minstrelsy.

Yet I would join thy sorrowing madrigal,  
Most melancholy cow, and sing of thee  
Full-hearted through my tears, for, after all,  
'Tis very kine in you to sing for me.



## FRIEND OF A WAYWARD HOUR

FRIEND of a wayward hour, you came  
Like some good ghost, and went the same;  
And I within the haunted place  
Sit smiling on your vanished face,  
And talking with—your name.

But thrice the pressure of your hand—  
First hail—congratulations—and  
Your last “God bless you!” as the train  
That brought you snatched you back again  
Into the unknown land.

“God bless me?” Why, your very prayer  
Was answered ere you asked it there,  
I know—for when you came to lend  
Me your kind hand, and call me friend,  
God blessed me unaware.

## LINES

ON RECEIVING A PRESENT FROM AN UNKNOWN FRIEND

THOU little naked statuette,  
With fairy head a-tip,  
And eyelids ever downward let,  
And silence on thy lip,  
Thou comest from a friend unknown,  
Nor wilt confess,  
E'en in mute syllables of stone,  
That friend's address.

And so, still pools of gratitude  
I pour out at thy feet;  
And could it mirror back thy nude  
Perfection half as sweet  
As rests within this heart of mine  
That friend unknown,  
Why, smiles would light that face of thine  
And warm the stone.

## PAN

THIS Pan is but an idle god, I guess,  
Since all the fair midsummer of my dreams  
He loiters listlessly by woody streams,  
Soaking the lush glooms up with laziness;  
Or drowsing while the maiden-winds caress  
Him prankishly, and powder him with gleams  
Of sifted sunshine. And he ever seems  
Drugged with a joy unutterable—unless  
His low pipes whistle hints of it far out  
Across the ripples to the dragon-fly  
That, like a wind-born blossom blown about,  
Drops quiveringly down, as though to die—  
Then lifts and wavers on, as if in doubt  
Whether to fan his wings or fly without.



"When our baby died—"



## WHEN OUR BABY DIED

WHEN our baby died—  
My Ma she ist cried an' cried!  
Yes 'n' my Pa *he* cried, too—  
An' *I* cried—An' me an' you.—  
An' I 'tended like my doll  
She cried too—An' ever'—all—  
O ist *ever'body* cried  
When our baby died!

When our baby died—  
Nen I got to took a ride!  
An' we all ist rode an' rode  
Clean to Heav'n where baby goed—  
Mighty nigh!—An' nen Ma she  
Cried ag'in—an' Pa—an' me.—  
All but ist the *Angels* cried  
When our baby died!

## A FULL HARVEST

SEEMS like a feller'd ort'o jes' to-day  
Git down and roll and waller, don't you  
know,

In that-air stubble, and flop up and crow,  
Seein' sich crops! I'll undertake to say  
There're no wheat's ever turned out thataway  
Afore this season!—Folks is keerless, though,  
And too fergitful—'caze we'd ort'o show  
More thankfulness!—Jes' looky hyonder, hey?—  
And watch that little reaper wadin' thue  
That last old yaller hunk o' harvest-ground—  
Jes natchur'ly a-slicin' it in two  
Like honeycomb, and gaumin' it around  
The field—like it had nothin' else to do  
On'y jes' waste it all on me and you!

## MY BACHELOR CHUM

A CORPULENT man is my bachelor chum,  
With a neck apoplectic and thick—  
An abdomen on him as big as a drum,  
And a fist big enough for the stick;  
With a walk that for grace is clear out of the case,  
And a wobble uncertain—as though  
His little bow-legs had forgotten the pace  
That in youth used to favor him so.

He is forty, at least; and the top of his head  
Is a bald and a glittering thing;  
And his nose and his two chubby cheeks are as red  
As three rival roses in spring:  
His mouth is a grin with the corners tucked in,  
And his laugh is so breezy and bright  
That it ripples his features and dimples his chin  
With a billowy look of delight.

He is fond of declaring he “don’t care a straw”—  
That “the ills of a bachelor’s life  
Are blisses, compared with a mother-in-law,  
And a boarding-school miss for a wife!”



So he smokes and he drinks, and he jokes and he  
winks,  
And he dines and he wines, all alone,  
With a thumb ever ready to snap as he thinks  
Of the comforts he never has known.

But up in his den—(Ah, my bachelor chum!)—  
I have sat with him there in the gloom,  
When the laugh of his lips died away to become  
But a phantom of mirth in the room.  
And to look on him there you would love him,  
for all  
His ridiculous ways, and be dumb  
As the little girl-face that smiles down from the  
wall  
On the tears of my bachelor chum.

TOMMY SMITH

DIMPLE-CHEEKED and rosy-lipped,  
With his cap-rim backward tipped,  
Still in fancy I can see  
Little Tommy smile on me—  
Little Tommy Smith.

Little unsung Tommy Smith—  
Scarce a name to rhyme it with;  
Yet most tenderly to me  
Something sings unceasingly—  
Little Tommy Smith.

On the verge of some far land  
Still forever does he stand,  
With his cap-rim rakishly  
Tilted; so he smiles on me—  
Little Tommy Smith.

Elder-blooms contrast the grace  
Of the rover's radiant face—  
Whistling back, in mimicry,  
"Old—Bob—White!" all liquidly—  
Little Tommy Smith.

O my jaunty statuette  
Of first love, I see you yet,  
Though you smile so mistily,  
It is but through tears I see,  
Little Tommy Smith.

But, with crown tipped back behind,  
And the glad hand of the wind  
Smoothing back your hair, I see  
Heaven's best angel smile on me,—  
Little Tommy Smith.

## THE LAUGHTER OF THE RAIN

*The rain sounds like a laugh to me—  
A low laugh poured out limpidly.*

MY very soul smiles as I listen to  
The low, mysterious laughter of the rain,  
Poured musically over heart and brain  
Till sodden care, soaked with it through and  
through,  
Sinks; and, with wings wet with it as with dew,  
My spirit flutters up, with every stain  
Rinsed from its plumage, and as white again  
As when the old laugh of the rain was new.  
Then laugh on, happy Rain! laugh louder yet!—  
Laugh out in torrent-bursts of watery mirth;  
Unlock thy lips of purple cloud, and let  
Thy liquid merriment baptize the earth,  
And wash the sad face of the world, and set  
The universe to music dripping-wet!

## ETERNITY

O WHAT a weary while it is to stand,  
Telling the countless ages o'er and o'er,  
Till all the finger-tips held out before  
Our dazzled eyes by heaven's starry hand  
Drop one by one, yet at some dread command  
Are held again, and counted evermore!  
How feverish the music seems to pour  
Along the throbbing veins of anthems grand!  
And how the cherubim sing on and on—  
The seraphim and angels—still in white—  
Still harping—still enraptured—far withdrawn  
In hovering armies tranced in endless flight!  
. . . God's mercy! is there never dusk or dawn,  
Or any crumb of gloom to feed upon?

## LAST WORDS

HE left me for a foreign land:  
I could not even free  
One little tear to gem the hand  
That God had given me;  
For "I will follow soon, my dear,"  
I laughed with girlish air,—  
"The sun that cheers our pathway here  
Shall beam upon us there!"

And so we parted. . . . Listen, God!—  
I may not even free  
One little tear to dew the sod  
Where, sleeping peacefully,  
He waits in foreign lands—my dear!  
But prophecy and prayer,—  
"The sun that cheers our pathway here  
Shall beam upon us—*there!*"

## AT BAY

DESPERATE, at last I stand  
Ready, Fate, with open hand  
To grasp yours, or to strike  
Blow for blow—just as you like.

You have dogged me day by day—  
Chased me when a child at play:  
Even from the mother-nest  
Pushed me when I needed rest.

You have crouched along my track  
Like a hound, and hurled me back,  
While your dog's-tongue lapped the blood  
Of my murdered babyhood.

Pitilessly, year by year,  
From the farthest past to here,  
You have fallen like a blight  
On each blossom of delight.

You have risen up between  
Me and every hope serene  
That has promised rest at last  
From the trials of the past.

You have shut the light of day  
From my present—stolen away  
All my faith in better things  
Than sheer desperation brings.

But as now I come to know  
That I may no farther go,  
I have turned—not to resist,  
But to greet you hand or fist.



## A WORN-OUT PENCIL

WELLADAY!  
Here I lay

You at rest—all worn away,  
O my pencil, to the tip  
Of our old companionship!

Memory  
Sighs to see  
What you are, and used to be,  
Looking backward to the time  
When you wrote your earliest rhyme!—

When I sat  
Filing at  
Your first point, and dreaming that  
Your initial song should be  
Worthy of posterity.

With regret  
I forget  
If the song be living yet,  
Yet remember, vaguely now,  
It was honest, anyhow.

You have brought  
Me a thought—  
Truer yet was never taught,—  
    That the silent song is best,  
    And the unsung worthiest.

So if I,  
When I die,  
May as uncomplainingly  
    Drop aside as now you do,  
    Write of me, as I of you:—

Here lies one  
Who begun  
Life a-singing, heard of none;  
    And he died, satisfied,  
    With his dead songs by his side.

## GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE

“GOD bless us every one!” prayed Tiny Tim,  
Crippled, and dwarfed of body, yet so tall  
Of soul, we tiptoe earth to look on him,  
High towering over all.

He loved the loveless world, nor dreamed indeed  
That it, at best, could give to him, the while,  
But pitying glances, when his only need  
Was but a cheery smile.

And thus he prayed, “God bless us every one!”—  
Enfolding all the creeds within the span  
Of his child-heart; and so, despising none,  
Was nearer saint than man.

I like to fancy God, in Paradise,  
Lifting a finger o’er the rhythmic swing  
Of chiming harp and song, with eager eyes  
Turned earthward, listening—

The Anthem stilled—the Angels leaning there  
Above the golden walls—the morning sun  
Of Christmas bursting flower-like with the prayer,  
“God bless us every one!”

## THE TREE-TOAD

“‘**S**CUR’OUS-LIKE,” said the tree-toad,  
“I’ve twittered fer rain all day;  
And I got up soon,  
And hollered tel noon—  
But the sun, hit blazed away,  
Tel I jest clumb down in a crawfish-hole,  
Weary at hart, and sick at soul!

“Dozed away fer an hour,  
And I tackled the thing ag’in:  
And I sung, and sung,  
Tel I knowed my lung  
Was jest about gïve in;  
And *then*, thinks I, ef hit don’t rain *now*,  
They’s nothin’ in singin’, anyhow!

“Onc’t in a while some farmer  
Would come a-drivin’ past;  
And he’d hear my cry,  
And stop and sigh—  
Tel I jest laid back, at last,  
And I hollered rain tel I thought my  
th’oat  
Would bust wide open at ever’ note!

"But I *fetch*ed her!—O I *fetch*ed her!—  
'Cause a little while ago,  
As I kindo' set,  
With one eye shet,  
And a-singin' soft and low,  
A voice drapped down on my fevered  
brain,  
A-sayin',—*'Ef you'll jest hush I'll  
rain!'*"

## LAUGHING SONG

SING us something full of laughter;  
Tune your harp, and twang the strings  
Till your glad voice, chirping after,  
Mates the song the robin sings:  
Loose your lips and let them flutter  
Like the wings of wanton birds,—  
Though they naught but laughter utter,  
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

Sing in ringing tones that mingle  
In a melody that flings  
Joyous echoes in a jingle  
Sweeter than the minstrel sings:  
Sing of Winter, Spring or Summer,  
Clang of war, or low of herds;  
Trill of cricket, roll of drummer—  
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

Like the lispings laughter glancing  
From the meadow brooks and springs,  
Or the river's ripples dancing  
To the tune the current sings—  
Sing of Now, and the Hereafter;  
Let your glad song, like the birds',  
Overflow with limpid laughter—  
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

## THE WITCH OF ERKMURDEN

### I

WHO cantereth forth in the night so late—  
So late in the night, and so nigh the dawn?  
'Tis The Witch of Erkmurden who leapeth the gate  
Of the old churchyard where the three Sprites wait  
Till the whir of her broom is gone.

And who peereth down from the belfry tall,  
With the ghost-white face and the ghastly stare,  
With lean hands clinched in the grated wall  
Where the red vine rasps and the rank leaves fall,  
And the clock-stroke drowns his prayer?

### II

The wee babe wails, and the storm grows loud,  
Nor deeper the dark of the night may be,  
For the lightning's claw, with a great wet cloud,  
Hath wiped the moon and the wild-eyed crowd  
Of the stars out wrathfully.

Knuckled and kinked as the hunchback shade  
Of a thorn-tree bendeth the bedlam old  
Over the couch where the mother-maid,  
With her prayerful eyes, and the babe are laid,  
Waiting the doom untold.

"Mother, O Mother, I only crave  
Mercy for him and the babe—not me!"  
"Hush! for it maketh my brain to rave  
Of my two white shrouds, and my one wide grave,  
And a mound for my children three."

"Mother, O Mother, I only pray  
Pity for him who is son to thee  
And more than my brother.—" "Wilt hush, I say!  
Though I meet thee not at the Judgment Day,  
I will bury my children three!"

"Then hark! O Mother, I hear his cry—  
Hear his curse from the church-tower now,—  
'Ride thou witch till thy hate shall die,  
Yet hell as Heaven eternally  
Be sealed to such as thou!"

An infant's wail—then a laugh, god wot,  
That strangled the echoes of deepest hell;  
And a thousand shuttles of lightning shot,  
And the moon bulged out like a great red blot,  
And a shower of blood-stars fell.

### III

There is one wide grave scooped under the eaves—  
Under the eaves as they weep and weep;  
And, veiled by the mist that the dead storm weaves,  
The hag bends low, and the earth receives  
Mother and child asleep.



There's the print of the hand at either throat,  
And the frothy ooze at the lips of each,  
But both smile up where the new stars float,  
And the moon sails out like a silver boat  
Unloosed from a stormy beach.

## IV

Bright was the morn when the sexton gray  
Twirled the rope of the old church-bell,—  
But it answered not, and he tugged away—  
And lo, at his feet a dead man lay—  
Dropped down with a single knell.

And the scared wight found, in the lean hand  
gripped,  
A scrip which read: "O the grave is wide,  
But it empty waits, for the low eaves dripped  
Their prayerful tears, and the three Sprites slipped  
Away with my babe and bride."

## THE BALLAD OF SMILES AND TEARS

BY LEE O. HARRIS AND JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

### I

WHEN the gleeful Spring on dancing feet  
Pranks the sward of the forest aisles,  
And the bluebird pipes from his old retreat,  
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:  
But whenever the wind of winter piles  
The drifting snow on the frozen meres,  
And the feet are worn with the weary miles,  
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

### II

When the soul is brimmed with a joy too sweet  
To waste like that of a laughing child's,  
When the lips of love for the first time meet,  
O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:  
But whenever the kiss of love defiles,  
And friendship wanes with the waning years,  
When faith has perished, and hope beguiles,  
Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

III

When the brow is crowned and the song complete,  
 And the minstrel's guerdon reconciles  
 The victor-soul to the heart's defeat,  
 O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:  
 But whenever the world in scorn compiles  
 Its ready pages of scoffs and jeers,  
 And the brain is weary of envy's wiles,  
 Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

L'ENVOY

When the eyelids droop like a drowsy child's,  
 O then may the glad face bloom with smiles:  
 But whenever the waking is fraught with fears,  
 Then hearts that are heavy may melt in tears.

## THIS MAN JONES

THIS man Jones was what you'd call  
A feller 'at had no sand at all;  
Kind o' consumed, and undersize,  
And sallor-complected, with big sad eyes,  
And a kind-of-a sort-of-a hang-dog style,  
And a sneakin' sort-of-a half-way smile  
'At kind o' give him away to us  
As a preacher, maybe, er somepin' wuss.

Didn't take with the gang—well, no—  
But still we managed to use him, though,—  
Coddin' the gilly along the rout',  
And drivin' the stakes 'at he pulled out—  
Fer I was one of the bosses then,  
And of course stood in with the canvasmen;  
And the way we put up jobs, you know,  
On this man Jones jes' beat the show!

Ust to rattle him scandalous,  
And keep the feller a-dodgin' us,  
And a-shyin' round half skeered to death,  
And afeerd to whimper above his breath;

Give him a cussin', and then a kick,  
And then a kind-of-a backhand lick—  
Jes' fer the fun of seein' him climb  
Around with a head on most the time.

But what was the curioust thing to me,  
Was along o' the party—let me see,—  
Who was our "Lion Queen" last year?—  
Mamzelle Zanty, or De La Pierre?—  
Well, no matter—a stunnin' mash,  
With a red-ripe lip, and a long eyelash,  
And a figger sich as the angels owns—  
And one too many fer this man Jones.

He'd allus wake in the afternoon,  
As the band waltzed in on the lion-tune,  
And there, from the time 'at she'd go in  
Till she'd back out of the cage ag'in,  
He'd stand, shaky and limber-kneed—  
'Specially when she come to "feed  
The beasts raw meat with her naked hand"—  
And all that business, you understand.

And it *was* resky in that den—  
Fer I think she juggled three cubs then,  
And a big "green" lion 'at used to smash  
Collar-bones fer old Frank Nash;  
And I reckon now she hain't fergot  
The afternoon old "Nero" sot  
His paws on *her*!—but as fer me,  
It's a sort-of-a mixed-up mystery:—

Kind o' remember an awful roar,  
And see her back fer the bolted door—  
See the cage rock—heerd her call  
“God have mercy!” and that was all—  
Fer they ain't no livin' man can tell  
*What* it's like when a thousand yell  
In female tones, and a thousand more  
Howl in bass till their throats is sore!

But the keeper said 'at dragged her out,  
They heerd some feller laugh and shout—  
“Save her! Quick! I've got the cuss!”  
And yit she waked and smiled on *us*!  
And we daren't flinch, fer the doctor said,  
Seein' as this man Jones was dead,  
Better to jes' not let her know  
Nothin' o' that fer a week er so.

## WAIT

WE know, O faltering heart,  
Thy need is great:  
But weary is the way that leads to art,  
And all who journey there must bear their part—  
Must bear their part, and—wait.

The way is wild and steep,  
And desolate:  
No flowers blossom there, nor lilies peep  
Above the walls to warn you, as you weep,  
With one white whisper—"Wait."

You will find thorns, alas!  
And keen as fate:  
And, reaching from rank fens of withered grass,  
Briers will clutch your feet, nor let you pass—  
And you must wait—must wait.

And though with failing sight  
You see the gate  
Of Promise locked and barred, with swarthy  
Night  
Guarding the golden keys of morning-light,—  
Press bravely on—and wait.

## LELLOINE

### I

TINY queen,  
Lelloine!  
Little eyes laugh out between  
Dimpled fingers that were busy  
But a weary moment since  
Mischief-making—for she is a  
Match for Puck, the fairy prince!  
She must ever be advancing  
Some new prank; and laughing, dancing,  
Disappearing at the door,  
Like a sunbeam leaving shaded  
All that was so bright before—  
Like a sunbeam leaving faded  
Flowers on the floor.  
O, you joking, dear provoking,  
Little laughing Lelloine!

### II

Calm, serene,  
Lelloine!  
Lying lily-like between  
The blurred leaves of life and love



That our wet eyes bend above,  
Lisp nor laughter on the lips :  
Two white rose-leaves now eclipse  
Such of glances as the chance  
Dimple dances in advance.  
Darling! Darling! tell us why  
You do neither laugh nor cry ;  
Even though you moaned in pain,  
We could be so glad again !  
What unchanging smile is this  
That we shudder so to kiss?  
Hearts are leaning low to glean  
All your meaning, Lelloine.

## A DREAM OF AUTUMN

MELLOW hazes, lowly trailing  
Over wood and meadow, veiling  
Somber skies, with wild fowl sailing  
Sailor-like to foreign lands;  
And the north wind overleaping  
Summer's brink, and flood-like sweeping  
Wrecks of roses where the weeping-  
Willows wring their helpless hands.

Flared, like Titan torches flinging  
Flakes of flame and embers, springing  
From the vale, the trees stand swinging  
In the moaning atmosphere;  
While in dead'ning lands the lowing  
Of the cattle, sadder growing,  
Fills the sense to overflowing  
With the sorrow of the year.

Sorrowfully, yet the sweeter  
Sings the brook in rippled meter  
Under boughs that lithely teeter  
Lorn birds, answering from the shores

Through the viny, shady-shiny  
Interspaces, shot with tiny  
Flying motes that fleck the winy  
Wave-engraven sycamores.

Fields of ragged stubble, wrangled  
With rank weeds, and shocks of tangled  
Corn, with crests like rent plumes dangled  
Over Harvest's battle-plain;  
And the sudden whirl and whistle  
Of the quail that, like a missile,  
Whizzes over thorn and thistle,  
And, a missile, drops again.

Muffled voices, hid in thickets  
Where the redbird stops to stick its  
Ruddy beak betwixt the pickets  
Of the truant's rustic trap;  
And the sound of laughter ringing  
Where, within the wild vine swinging,  
Climb Bacchante's schoolmates, flinging  
Purple clusters in her lap.

Rich as wine, the sunset flashes  
Round the tilted world, and dashes  
Up the sloping West, and splashes  
Red foam over sky and sea—  
Till my dream of Autumn, paling  
In the splendor all-prevailing,  
Like a sallow leaf goes sailing  
Down the silence solemnly.

## SINCE MY MOTHER DIED

SINCE my mother died, the tone  
Of my voice has fainter grown,  
And my words, so strangely few,  
Are as strange to me as you.  
Something like a lens is drawn  
Over all I look upon,  
And the world is O so wide,  
    Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, my face  
Knows not any resting-place,  
Save in visions, lightly pressed  
In its old accustomed rest  
On her shoulder. But I wake  
With a never-ending ache  
In my heart, and naught beside,  
    Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, the years  
Have been dropping like my tears,  
Till the bloom is washed away  
From my cheeks, and slow decay

Seams the corners of my eyes,  
Where my childish laughter lies  
Drowned in tears that never dried  
    Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, my feet  
Falter in the crowded street,  
With bewildered steps that seem  
Tangled in some grassy dream,  
And, in busy haunts of men,  
Slowly down the past again  
Do I wander weary-eyed,  
    Since my mother died.

Since my mother died, O friends!  
No one leads me now, or lends  
Me a kindly word, or touch  
Of the hands I need so much;  
No one counsels me, or cares  
For my trials, doubts, despairs,  
And the world is O so wide,  
    Since my mother died.

## BELLS JANGLED

I LIE low-coiled in a nest of dreams;  
The lamp gleams dim i' the odorous gloom,  
And the stars at the casement leak long gleams  
Of misty light through the haunted room  
Where I lie low-coiled in dreams.

The night winds ooze o'er my dusk-drowned face  
In a dewy flood that ebbs and flows,  
Washing a surf of dim white lace  
Under my throat and the dark red rose  
In the shade of my dusk-drowned face.

There's a silken strand of some strange sound  
Slipping out of a skein of song:  
Eerily as a call unwound  
From a fairy bugle, it slides along  
In a silken strand of sound.

There's the tinkling drip of a faint guitar;  
There's a gurgling flute, and a blaring horn  
Blowing bubbles of tune afar  
O'er the misty heights of the hills of morn,  
To the drip of a faint guitar.

And I dream that I neither sleep nor wake—  
Careless am I if I wake or sleep,  
For my soul floats out on the waves that break  
In crests of song on the shoreless deep  
Where I neither sleep nor wake.

## DUSK SONG—THE BEETLE

THE shrilling locust slowly sheathes  
His dagger-voice, and creeps away  
Beneath the brooding leaves where breathes  
The zephyr of the dying day:  
One naked star has waded through  
The purple shallows of the night,  
And faltering as falls the dew  
It drips its misty light.

*O'er garden blooms,  
On tides of musk,  
The beetle booms adown the glooms  
And bumps along the dusk.*

The katydid is rasping at  
The silence from the tangled broom:  
On drunken wings the flitting bat  
Goes staggering athwart the gloom;  
The toadstool bulges through the weeds,  
And lavishly to left and right  
The fireflies, like golden seeds,  
Are sown about the night.



*O'er slumbrous blooms,  
On floods of musk,  
The beetle booms adown the glooms  
And bumps along the dusk.*

The primrose flares its baby-hands  
Wide open, as the empty moon,  
Slow lifted from the underlands,  
Drifts up the azure-arched lagoon;  
The shadows on the garden walk  
Are frayed with rifts of silver light;  
And, trickling down the poppy-stalk,  
The dewdrop streaks the night.

*O'er folded blooms,  
On swirls of musk,  
The beetle booms adown the glooms  
And bumps along the dusk.*

## SLEEP

THOU drowsy god, whose blurred eyes, half  
    awink,  
    Muse on me,—drifting out upon thy dreams,  
    I lave my soul as in enchanted streams  
Where reveling satyrs pipe along the brink,  
And, tipsy with the melody they drink,  
    Uplift their dangling hooves and down the beams  
    Of sunshine dance like motes. Thy languor seems  
An ocean-depth of love wherein I sink  
    Like some fond Argonaut, right willingly,—  
Because of wooing eyes upturned to mine,  
    And siren-arms that coil their sorcery  
About my neck, with kisses so divine,  
    The heavens reel above me, and the sea  
    Swallows and licks its wet lips over me.

## MARTHY ELLEN

THEY'S nothin' in the name to strike  
A feller more'n common like!  
'Taint liable to git no praise  
Ner nothin' like it nowadays;  
An' yit that name o' her'n is jest  
As purty as the purtiest—  
And more'n that, I'm here to say  
I'll live a-thinkin' thataway  
And die fer Marthy Ellen!

It may be I was prejudust  
In favor of it from the fust—  
'Cause I kin ricollect jest how  
We met, and hear her mother now  
A-callin' of her down the road—  
And, aggervatin' little toad!—  
I see her now, jest sort o' half-  
Way disapp'inted, turn and laugh  
And mock her—"Marthy Ellen!"

Our people never had no fuss,  
And yit they never tuck to us;  
We neigbered back and foreds some;  
Until they see she liked to come  
To our house—and me and her  
Was jest together ever'whur  
And all the time—and when they'd see  
That I liked her and she liked me,  
They'd holler "Marthy Ellen!"

When we growed up, and they shet down  
 On me and her a-runnin' roun'  
 Together, and her father said  
 He'd never leave her nary red,  
 So he'p him, ef she married me,  
 And so on—and her mother she  
 Jest agged the gyrl, and said she 'lowed  
 She'd ruther see her in her shroud,  
     I *writ* to Marthy Ellen—

That is, I kind o' tuck my pen  
 In hand, and stated whur and when  
 The undersigned would be that night,  
 With two good hosses, saddled right  
 Fer lively travelin', in case  
 Her folks 'ud like to jine the race.  
 She sent the same note back, and writ  
 "The rose is red!" right under it—  
     "Your'n allus, Marthy Ellen."

That's all, I reckon—Nothin' more  
 To tell but what you've heerd afore—  
 The same old story, sweeter though  
 Fer all the trouble, don't you know.  
 Old-fashioned name! and yit it's jest  
 As purty as the purtiest;  
 And more'n that, I'm here to say  
 I'll live a-thinkin' thataway,  
     And die fer Marthy Ellen!

## THE LITTLE TOWN O' TAILHOLT

YOU kin boast about yer cities, and their stiddy  
growth and size,  
And brag about yer County-seats, and business enter-  
prise,  
And railroads, and factories, and all sich foolery—  
But the little Town o' Tailholt is big enough fer me!

You kin harp about yer churches, with their steeples  
in the clouds,  
And gas about yer graded streets, and blow about  
yer crowds;  
You kin talk about yer "*theaters*," and all you've got  
to see—  
But the little Town o' Tailholt is *show* enough  
fer me!

They hain't no *style* in our town—hit's little-like  
and small—  
They hain't no "*churches*," nuther,—jes' the meet-  
in'-house is all;  
They's no sidewalks, to speak of—but the highway's  
allus free,  
And the little Town o' Tailholt is wide enough  
fer me!

Some finds it discommodin'-like, I'm willing to  
admit  
To hev but one post-office, and a womern keepin'  
hit,  
And the drug-store, and shoe-shop, and grocery, all  
three—  
But the little Town o' Tailholt is handy 'nough  
fer me!

You kin smile and turn yer nose up, and joke and  
hev yer fun,  
And laugh and holler "Tail-holts is better holts'n  
none!"  
Ef the city suits you better, w'y, hit's where you'd  
ort'o be—  
But the little Town o' Tailholt's good enough  
fer me!

## WHERE SHALL WE LAND

*Where shall we land you, sweet?*

—SWINBURNE

ALL listlessly we float  
Out seaward in the boat  
That beareth Love.  
Our sails of purest snow  
Bend to the blue below  
And to the blue above.  
Where shall we land?

We drift upon a tide  
Shoreless on every side,  
Save where the eye  
Of Fancy sweeps far lands  
Shelved slopingly with sands  
Of gold and porphyry.  
Where shall we land?

The fairy isles we see,  
Loom up so mistily—  
So vaguely fair,

We do not care to break  
Fresh bubbles in our wake  
    To bend our course for there.  
    Where shall we land?

The warm winds of the deep  
Have lulled our sails to sleep,  
    And so we glide  
Careless of wave or wind,  
Or change of any kind,  
    Or turn of any tide.  
    Where shall we land?

We droop our dreamy eyes  
Where our reflection lies  
    Steeped in the sea,  
And, in an endless fit  
Of languor, smile on it  
    And its sweet mimicry.  
    Where shall we land?

“Where shall we land?” God’s grace!  
I know not any place  
    So fair as this—  
Swung here between the blue  
Of sea and sky, with you  
    To ask me, with a kiss,  
    “Where shall we land?”



HOPE

HOPE, bending o'er me one time, snowed the  
flakes

Of her white touches on my folded sight,  
And whispered, half rebukingly, "What makes  
My little girl so sorrowful to-night?"

O scarce did I unclasp my lids, or lift  
 Their tear-glued fringes, as with blind embrace  
 I caught within my arms the mother-gift,  
 And with wild kisses dappled all her face.

That was a baby dream of long ago:  
My fate is fanged with frost, and tongued with  
flame:  
My woman-soul, chased naked through the snow,  
Stumbles and staggers on without an aim.

And yet, here in my agony, sometimes  
A faint voice reaches down from some far height,  
And whispers through a glamouring of rhymes,—  
“What makes my little girl so sad to-night?”

## THE LITTLE TINY KICKSHAW

—*And any little tiny kickshaw.*

—SHAKESPEARE.

O THE little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent tae  
me,  
'Tis sweeter than the sugar-plum that reepens on the  
tree,  
Wi' denty flavorin's o' spice an' musky rosemarie,  
The little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent tae me.

'Tis luscious wi' the stalen tang o' fruits frae ower  
the sea,  
An' e'en its fragrance gars me laugh wi' langin' lip  
an' ee,  
Till a' its frazen scheen o' white maun melten hinnie  
be—  
Sae weel I luve the kickshaw that Mither sent tae  
me.

O I luve the tiny kickshaw, an' I smack my lips wi'  
glee,  
Aye mickle do I luve the taste o' sic a luxourie,  
But maist I luve the luvein' han's that could the  
giftie gie  
O' the little tiny kickshaw that Mither sent tae me.

## DEATH

LO, I am dying! And to feel the King  
Of Terrors fasten on me, steep all sense  
Of life, and love, and loss, and everything,  
In such deep calms of restful indolence,  
His keenest fangs of pain are sweet to me  
As fusèd kisses of mad lovers' lips  
When, flung shut-eyed in spasmed ecstasy,  
They feel the world spin past them in eclipse,  
And so thank God with ever-tightening lids!  
But what I see, the soul of me forbids  
All utterance of; and what I hear and feel,  
The rattle in my throat could ill reveal  
Though it were music to your ears as to  
Mine own.—Press closer—closer—I have grown  
So great, your puny arms about me thrown  
Seem powerless to hold me here with you;—  
I slip away—I waver—and—I fall—  
Christ! What a plunge! Where am I dropping? All  
My breath bursts into dust—I can not cry—  
I whirl—I reel and veer up overhead,  
And drop flat-faced against—against—the sky—  
Soh, bless me! I am dead!

## TO THE WINE-GOD MERLUS

### *A Toast of Jucklet's*

**H**O! ho! thou jolly god, with kinkèd lips  
And laughter-streaming eyes, thou liftest  
up

The heart of me like any wassail-cup,  
And from its teeming brim, in foaming drips,  
Thou blowest all my cares. I cry to thee,  
Between the sips:—Drink long and lustily;  
Drink thou my ripest joys, my richest mirth,  
My maddest staves of wanton minstrelsy;  
Drink every song I've tinkered here on earth  
With any patch of music; drink! and be  
Thou drainer of my soul, and to the lees  
Drink all my lover-thrills and ecstasies;  
And with a final gulp—ho! ho!—drink me,  
And roll me o'er thy tongue eternally.

## THE GINOINE AR-TICKLE

TALKIN' o' poetry,—There're few men yit  
'At's got the stuff b'iled down so's it'll pour  
Out sorgum-like, and keeps a year and more  
Jes' sweeter ever' time you tackle it!  
Why, all the jinglin' truck 'at hes been writ  
Fer twenty year and better is so pore  
You cain't find no sap in it any more  
'N you'd find juice in puff-balls!—*And I'd*  
*Quit!*

What people wants is facts, I apperhend;  
And naked Natur is the thing to give  
Your writin' bottom, eh? And I contend  
'At honest work is allus bound to live.  
Now them's my views; 'cause you kin recommend  
Sich poetry as that from end to end.

## A BRIDE

“O I AM weary!” she sighed, as her billowy  
Hair she unloosed in a torrent of gold  
That rippled and fell o’er a figure as willowy,  
Graceful and fair as a goddess of old:  
Over her jewels she flung herself drearily,  
Crumpled the laces that snowed on her breast,  
Crushed with her fingers the lily that wearily  
Clung in her hair like a dove in its nest.  
—And naught but her shadowy form in the  
mirror  
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near  
her!

“Weary?”—of what? Could we fathom the  
mystery?—  
Lift up the lashes weighed down by her tears  
And wash with their dew one white face from her  
history,  
Set like a gem in the red rust of years?  
Nothing will rest her—unless he who died of her  
Strayed from his grave, and, in place of the  
groom,  
Tipping her face, kneeling there by the side of her,  
Drained the old kiss to the dregs of his doom.  
—And naught but that shadowy form in the  
mirror  
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near  
her!

## STANZAS FOR A NEW SONG

WHISTLE us something old, you know!  
Pucker your lips with the old-time twist,  
And whistle the jigs of the long ago,  
Or the old hornpipes that you used to whist.  
Some old, old tune that we oft averred  
Was a little the oldest thing we'd heard  
Since "the bob-tailed nag" was a frisky colt,  
In the babbling days of old "Ben Bolt."

Whistle us something old and gray—  
Some toothless tune of the bygone years—  
Some bald old song that limps to-day  
With a walking-stick this vale of tears.  
Whistle a stave of the good old days,  
E'er the fur stood up in a thousand ways  
On the listener's pelt as he ripped and tore,  
And diddle-dee-blank-blanked Pinafore.

### CHORUS

Whistle us something old, you know!  
Pucker your lips with the old-time twist,  
And whistle the jigs of the long ago,  
Or the old hornpipes that you used to whist.

## LINES TO AN ONSETTLED YOUNG MAN

“O WHAT is Life at last,” says you,  
“ ’At woman-folks and man-folks  
too,  
Cain’t oncomplainin’, worry through?

“An’ what is Love, ’at no one yit  
’At’s monkeyed with it kin forgit,  
Er gits fat on remember’n hit?

“An’ what is Death?”—W’y, looky hyur—  
Ef Life an’ Love don’t suit you, sir,  
Hit’s jes’ the thing yer lookin’ fer!



## PLANTATION HYMN

**H**EAR dat rum'lin' in de sky!  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!  
O, dat's de good Lord walkin' by,  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

### CHORUS

Mahster! Jesus!  
You done come down to please us,  
And dahs de good Lord sees us,  
As he goes walkin' by!

See dat lightnin' lick his tongue?  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!  
'Spec he taste de song 'ut de angels sung—  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

De big black clouds is bust in two,  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!  
And dahs de 'postles peekin' frue,  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

Know dem angels ev'ry one,  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!  
Kase dey's got wings and we'se got none,  
Hol' fas', brudders, till you git dah!

CHORUS

Mahster! Jesus!  
You done come down to please us,  
And dahs de good Lord sees us,  
As he goes walkin' by!

## LAWYER AND CHILD

HOW large was Alexander, father,  
That parties designate  
The historic gentleman as rather  
Inordinately great?

Why, son, to speak with conscientious  
Regard for history,  
Waiving all claims, of course, to heights  
pretentious,—  
About the size of me.

## THE LOST KISS

I PUT by the half-written poem,  
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,  
Writes on,—“Had I words to complete it,  
Who’d read it, or who’d understand?”  
But the little bare feet on the stairway,  
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,  
And the eery-low lisp on the silence,  
Cry up to me over it all.

So I gather it up—where was broken  
The tear-faded thread of my theme,  
Telling how, as one night I sat writing,  
A fairy broke in on my dream,  
A little inquisitive fairy—  
My own little girl, with the gold  
Of the sun in her hair, and the dewy  
Blue eyes of the fairies of old.

’Twas the dear little girl that I scolded—  
“For was it a moment like this,”  
I said, “when she knew I was busy,  
To come romping in for a kiss?—

Come rowdying up from her mother,  
And clamoring there at my knee  
For 'One 'ittle kiss for my dolly,  
And one 'ittle uzzer for me! "

God, pity the heart that repelled her,  
And the cold hand that turned her away,  
And take, from the lips that denied her,  
This answerless prayer of to-day!  
Take, Lord, from my mem'ry forever  
That pitiful sob of despair,  
And the patter and trip of the little bare feet,  
And the one piercing cry on the stair!

I put by the half-written poem,  
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,  
Writes on,—“Had I words to complete it,  
Who'd read it, or who'd understand?”  
But the little bare feet on the stairway,  
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,  
And the eery-low lisp on the silence,  
Cry up to me over it all.

## MICHAEL FLYNN AND THE BABY

LUK at 'ere, ould baby,—who  
Shak's the fist av 'im at you?  
Who's the spalpeen wid the stim  
Av his poipe a pokin' 'im?  
Who's the divil grinnin' 'ere  
In the eyes av yez, me dear?  
Arrah! darlint, spake and soy  
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

Wheer's the gab yer mither had  
Whin she blarneyed yer ould dad  
Wid her tricks and 'ily words  
Loike the liltin' av the birds?  
Wheer's the tongue av Michael Flynn,  
And the capers av the chin  
He's a-waggin' at yez?—Hoy?  
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

Arrah! baby, wid the eyes  
Av the saints in Paradise,  
And Saint Patrick's own bald pate,  
Is it yer too howly swate  
To be changin' words because  
It's the hod, and not the cross,  
Ornamints me showlder?—soy?  
Don't yez know yer feyther—boy?

## ON A SPLENDUD MATCH

*[On the night of the marraige of the foregoin' couple, which shall be nameless here, these lines was ca'mly dashed off in the alburn of the happy bride whilse the shivver-ree was goin' on outside the residence.]*

HE was warned against the womern—  
She was warned against the man.—  
And ef *that* won't make a weddin',  
W'y, they's nothin' else that can!

## THE SINGER

WHILE with Ambition's hectic flame  
He wastes the midnight oil,  
And dreams, high-throned on heights of  
fame,  
To rest him from his toil,—

Death's Angel, like a vast eclipse,  
Above him spreads her wings,  
And fans the embers of his lips  
To ashes as he sings.



## GUINEVERE

WHAT is it I am waiting for?  
My footfall in the corridor  
Jars upward through the night, and swings  
The brazen silence till it rings  
Like any bell. My weak knees faint  
Before the sad face of my saint,  
And, 'twixt my lifted eyes and tears,  
Dim lists of mounted cavaliers  
Swim past. . . . A nodding plume that dips  
To brush the dead prayers from my lips  
Like dust—. God's mercy! rid my sight  
Of Launcelot, or blind me quite!  
I know what duty is! Ah, Christ!  
The memory of our latest tryst  
Is fanged within my very soul! . . .  
I swear to you, in all control  
I held myself! . . . 'Twas love, I wis,  
That sprang upon that kiss of his,  
And drank and drained it to the lees  
Of three God-shaken destinies.  
'Twas love, I tell you, wild, insane,  
Stark mad and babbling, wanton, vain—  
But tell me, Where is Arthur?—or,  
What is it I am waiting for?

## THE WEREWIFE

SHE came to me in a dazzling guise  
Of gleaming tresses and glimmering eyes,  
With long, limp lashes that drooped and made  
For their baleful glances bowers of shade;  
And a face so white—so white and sleek  
That the roses blooming in either cheek  
Flamed and burned with a crimson glow  
Redder than ruddiest roses blow—  
Redder than blood of the roses know  
That Autumn spills in the drifted snow.  
And what could my fluttering, moth-winged soul  
Do but hover in her control?—  
With its little, bewildered bead-eyes fixed  
Where the gold and the white and the crimson  
    mixed?  
And when the tune of her low laugh went  
Up from that ivory instrument  
That you would have called her throat, I swear  
The notes built nests in her gilded hair,  
And nestled and whistled and twittered there,  
And wooed me and won me to my despair.  
And thus it was that she lured me on,  
Till the latest gasp of my love was gone,

And my soul lay dead, with a loathing face  
Turned in vain from her dread embrace,—  
For even its poor dead eyes could see  
Her sharp teeth sheathed in the flesh of me,  
And her dripping lips, as she turned to shake  
The red froth off that her greed did make,  
As my heart gripped hold of a deathless ache,  
And the kiss of her stung like the fang of a snake.

## THE BAN

### I

STRANGE dreams of what I used to be,  
And what I dreamed I *would* be, swim  
Before my vision, faint and dim  
As misty distances we see  
In pictured scenes of fairy lands ;  
And ever on, with empty hands,  
And eyes that ever lie to me,  
And smiles that no one understands,  
I grope adown my destiny.

### II

Some say I waver as I walk  
Along the crowded thoroughfares ;  
And some leer in my eyes, and talk  
Of dulness, while I see in theirs—  
Like fishes' eyes, alive or dead—  
But surfaces of vacancy—  
Blank disks that never seem to see,  
But glint and glow and glare instead.

## III

The ragged shawl I wear is wet  
With driving, dripping rains, and yet  
It seems a royal raiment, where,  
Through twisted torrents of my hair,  
I see rare gems that gleam and shine  
Like jewels in a stream of wine;  
The gaping shoes that clothe my feet  
Are golden sandals, and the shrine  
Where courtiers grovel and repeat  
Vain prayers, and where, in joy thereat,  
A fair Prince doffs his plumèd hat,  
And kneels, and names me all things sweet.

## IV

Sometimes the sun shines, and the lull  
Of winter noon is like a tune  
The stars might twinkle to the moon  
If night were white and beautiful—  
For when the clangor of the town  
And strife of traffic softens down,  
The wakeful hunger that I nurse,  
In listening, forgets to curse,  
Until—ah, joy! with drooping head  
I drowse, and dream that I am dead  
And buried safe beyond their eyes  
Who either pity or despise.

## AN IDIOT

I'M on'y thist a' idiot—  
That's what folks calls a feller what  
Ain't got no mind  
Of any kind,  
Ner don't know nothin' he's forgot.—  
I'm one o' *them*—But I know why  
The bees buzz *this* way when they fly,—  
'Cause honey it gits on their wings.  
Ain't thumbs and fingers funny things?

What's money? Hooh! it's thist a hole  
Punched in a round thing 'at won't roll  
'Cause they's a string  
Poked through the thing  
And fastened round your neck—that's all!  
Ef I could git my money off,  
I'd buy whole lots o' whoopin'-cough  
And give it to the boy next door  
Who died 'cause he ain't got no more.

What is it when you die? *I* know,—  
You can't wake up ag'in, ner go.  
To sleep no more—  
Ner kick, ner snore,

Ner lay and look and watch it snow;  
And when folks slaps and pinches you—  
You don't keer nothin' *what* they do.  
No honey on the *angels'* wings!  
Ain't thumbs and fingers funny things?

## AN ORDER FOR A SONG

MAKE me a song of all good things,  
And fill it full of murmurings,  
Of merry voices, such as we  
Remember in our infancy;  
But make it tender, for the sake  
Of hearts that brood and tears that break,  
And tune it with the harmony,  
The sighs of sorrow make.

Make me a song of summer-time,  
And pour such music down the rhyme  
As ripples over gleaming sands  
And grassy brinks of meadow-lands;  
But make it very sweet and low,  
For need of them that sorrow so,  
Because they reap with empty hands  
The dreams of long ago.

Make me a song of such a tone,  
That when we croon it all alone,  
The tears of longing as they drip,  
Will break in laughter on the lip;  
And make it, oh, so pure and clear  
And jubilant that every ear  
Shall drink its rapture sip by sip,  
And Heaven lean to hear.



## THE CONQUEROR

HE hears the whirl of the battle-drum,  
And the shrill-voiced fife, and the  
bugle-call,  
With a thirsty spirit that drinks it all  
As men might drink the wine poured from  
Old wicker flagons raimented  
With the rust and dust of ages dead.

He plunges into the crimson sea  
Of carnage, and with a dauntless pride,  
He swims, with his good star, side by side,  
To the blood-sprayed heights of Victory,  
Where never his glory waxes dim,  
Though a woman's weak hand conquers  
him.

And high and alone—as the sculptor makes  
Him set in stone that the world may see—  
He sits there, crowned eternally,  
And sheltered under a flag that shakes  
Her silken stripes and her silver stars  
Into a tangle of endless wars.

## AFTER DEATH

### A FANCY

AH! this delights me more than words could  
tell,—

To just lie stark and still, with folded hands  
That tremble not at greeting or farewell,  
Nor fumble foolishly in loosened strands  
Of woman's hair, nor grip with jealousy  
To find her face turned elsewhere smilingly.

With slumbrous lids, and mouth in mute repose,  
And lips that yearn no more for any kiss—  
Though it might drip, as from the red-lipped rose  
The dewdrop drips, 'twere not so sweet as this  
Unutterable density of rest  
That reigns in every vein of brain and breast!

And thus—soaked with still laughter through and  
through—

I lie here dreaming of the forms that pass  
Above my grave, to drop, with tears, a few  
White flowers that but curdle the green grass;—  
And if they read such sermons, they could see  
How I do pity them that pity me.

## THE MAD LOVER

MY eyes are feverish and dull;  
I'm tired, and my throat hurts so!  
And life has grown so pitiful—  
So very pitiful, I know  
Not any hope of rest or peace,  
But just to live on, ache by ache,  
Feeling my heart click on, nor cease,  
Nor ever wholly break.

You smiled so sweetly, Miriam Wayne,  
I could not help but love your smile,  
And fair as sunshine after rain  
It glimmered on me all the while;  
Why, it did soak as summer light  
Through all my life, until, indeed,  
I ripened as an apple might  
From golden rind to seed.

Fate never wrought so pitiless  
An evil, as when first your eyes  
Poured back in mine the tenderness  
That made the world a Paradise—

For Miriam, remembering  
The warm white hands that lay in mine  
Like wisps of sunshine vanishing—  
Your kisses, spilled like wine

Down over forehead, face and lips,  
Till I lay drunken with delight  
From crown of soul to finger-tips—  
. . . Shriek, Memory, in mad affright!—  
Howl at the moon like any hound!  
Yelp "love" and "liar" every breath,  
And "Heaven is lost and hell is found!"  
So moan yourself to death!

TO ROBERT BURNS

SWEET Singer that I loe the maist  
O' ony, sin' wi' eager haste  
I smacket bairn-lips ower the taste  
O' hinnied sang,  
I hail thee, though a blessed ghaist  
In Heaven lang!

For, weel I ken, nae cantie phrase,  
Nor courtly airs, nor lairdly ways,  
Could gar me freer blame, or praise,  
Or proffer hand,  
Where "Rantin' Robbie" and his lays  
Thegither stand.

And sae these hamely lines I send,  
Wi' jinglin' words at ilka end,  
In echo o' the sangs that wend  
Frae thee to me  
Like simmer-brooks, wi' mony a bend  
O' wimplin' glee.

In fancy, as, wi' dewy een,  
I part the clouds aboon the scene  
Where thou wast born, and peer atween,

I see nae spot  
In a' the Hielands half sae green  
And unforgot!

I see nae storied castle-hall,  
Wi' banners flauntin' ower the wall  
And serf and page in ready call,  
Sae grand to me  
As ane puir cotter's hut, wi' all  
Its poverty.

There where the simple daisy grew  
Sae bonnie sweet, and modest, too,  
Thy liltin' filled its wee head fu'  
O' sic a grace,  
It aye is weepin' tears o' dew  
Wi' droopit face.

Frae where the heather bluebells fling  
Their sangs o' fragrance to the Spring,  
To where the lavrock soars to sing,  
Still lives thy strain,  
For a' the birds are twittering  
Sangs like thine ain.

And aye, by light o' sun or moon,  
By banks o' Ayr, or Bonnie Doon,  
The waters lilt nae tender tune  
But sweeter seems  
Because they poured their limpid rune  
Through a' thy dreams.

Wi' brimmin' lip, and laughin' ee,  
Thou shookest even Grief wi' glee,  
Yet had nae niggart sympathy  
Where Sorrow bowed,  
But gavest a' thy tears as free  
As a' thy gowd.

And sae it is we loe thy name  
To see bleeze up wi' sic a flame,  
That a' pretentious stars o' fame  
Maun blink asklent,  
To see how simple worth may shame  
Their brightest glent.

## HER VALENTINE

SOMEBODY'S sent a funny little valentine to  
me.

It's a bunch of baby-roses in a vase of filigree,  
And hovering above them—just as cute as he can  
be—

Is a fairy cupid tangled in a scarf of poetry.

And the prankish little fellow looks so knowing in  
his glee,

With his golden bow and arrow, aiming most  
unerringly

At a pair of hearts so labeled that I may read and  
see

That one is meant for "One Who Loves," and one  
is meant for me.

But I know the lad who sent it! It's as plain as  
A-B-C!—

For the roses they are *blushing*, and the vase stands  
*awkwardly*,

And the little god above it—though as cute as he  
can be—

Can not breathe the lightest whisper of his burning  
love for me.



## SONGS TUNELESS

### I

HE kisses me! Ah, now, at last,  
He says good night as it should be,  
His great warm eyes bent yearningly  
Above my face—his arms locked fast  
About me, and mine own eyes dim  
With happy tears for love of him.

He kisses me! Last night, beneath  
A swarm of stars, he said I stood  
His one fair form of womanhood,  
And springing, shut me in the sheath  
Of a caress that almost hid  
Me from the good his kisses did.

He kisses me! He kisses me!  
This is the sweetest song I know,  
And so I sing it very low  
And faint, and O so tenderly  
That, though you listen, none but he  
May hear it as he kisses me.

## II

“How can I make you love me more?”—  
A thousand times she asks me this,  
Her lips uplifted with the kiss  
That I have tasted o’er and o’er,  
Till now I drain it with no sense  
Other than utter indolence.

“How can I make you love me more?”—  
A thousand times her questioning face  
Has nestled in its resting-place  
Unanswered, till, though I adore  
This thing of being loved, I doubt  
Not I could get along without.

“How can she make me love her more?”—  
Ah! little woman, if, indeed,  
I might be frank as is the need  
Of frankness, I would fall before  
Her very feet, and there confess  
My love were more if hers were less.

## III

Since I am old I have no care  
To babble silly tales of when  
I loved, and lied, as other men  
Have done, who boasted here and there,  
They would have died for the fair thing  
They after murdered, marrying.

Since I am old I reason thus—  
No thing survives, of all the past,  
But just regret enough to last  
Us till the clods have smothered us;—  
Then, with our dead loves, side by side,  
We may, perhaps, be satisfied.

Since I am old, and strive to blow  
Alive the embers of my youth  
And early loves, I find, in sooth,  
An old man's heart may burn so low,  
'Tis better just to calmly sit  
And rake the ashes over it.

## SISTER JONES'S CONFESSION

I THOUGHT the deacon liked me, yit  
I warn't adzackly shore of it—  
Fer, mind ye, time and time ag'in,  
When jiners 'ud be comin' in,  
I'd seed him shakin' hands as free  
With all the sistern as with me!  
But jurin' last Revival, where  
He called on *me* to lead in prayer  
An' kneeled there with me, side by side,  
A-whisper'n' "he felt sanctified  
Jes' tetchin' of my gyarment's hem,"—  
That settled things as fur as them-  
Thare *other* wimmin was concerned!—  
And—well!—I know I must 'a' turned  
A dozen colors!—*Flurried?*—*la!*—  
No mortal sinner never saw  
A gladder widder than the one  
A-kneelin' there and wonderun'  
Who'd pray!—So glad, upon my word,  
I raily couldn't thank the Lord!

## THE DEAD JOKE AND THE FUNNY MAN

LONG years ago, a funny man,  
Flushed with a strange delight,  
Sat down and wrote a funny thing  
All in the solemn night;  
And as he wrote he clapped his hands  
And laughed with all his might.  
For it was such a funny thing,  
O such a very funny thing,  
This wonderfully funny thing,  
He  
Laughed  
Outright.

And so it was this funny man  
Printed this funny thing—  
Forgot it, too, nor ever thought  
It worth remembering,  
Till but a day or two ago.  
(Ah! what may changes bring!)  
He found this selfsame funny thing  
In an exchange—"O funny thing!"  
He cried, "You dear old funny thing!"  
And  
Sobbed  
Outright.

## SLEEP

ORPHANED, I cry to thee:  
Sweet Sleep! O kneel and be  
A mother unto me!  
Calm thou my childish fears;  
Fold—fold mine eyelids to, all tenderly,  
And dry my tears.

Come, Sleep, all drowsy-eyed  
And faint with languor,—slide  
Thy dim face down beside  
Mine own, and let me rest  
And nestle in thy heart, and there abide,  
A favored guest.

Good night to every care,  
And shadow of despair!  
Good night to all things where  
Within is no delight!—  
Sleep opens her dark arms, and, swooning  
there,  
I sob: Good night—good night!

## ONE ANGEL

“A HOMELY little woman with big hands”:  
’Twas thus she named herself, and shook  
her head

All solemnly, the day that we were wed,  
While I—well, I laughed lightly as I said,—  
“No prince am I astray from fairy lands,  
O, ‘homely little woman with big hands’ !”

“My homely little woman with big hands”  
I called her ever after,—first, intent  
On irony and admonition blent;  
Then out of—since she smiled—pure merriment;  
And lastly, from sheer lack of reprimands.  
Brave, homely little woman with big hands!

My homely little woman with big hands,  
Somehow, grew almost beautiful to me  
As time went by. Her features I could see  
Grow ever fairer; and so tenderly  
The strong hands clung, their touches were  
commands,  
Dear homely little woman with big hands!

\* \* \* \* \*

A homely little woman, with big hands  
Folded all patiently across her breast—  
The plain face fair and beautiful in rest—  
But O, the lips that answer not when pressed!  
“Make me,” I cry to God, who understands,  
“A homely little angel with big hands!”



## LAUGHTER

WITHIN the coziest corner of my dreams  
He sits, high-throned above all gods that  
be

Portrayed in marble-cold mythology,  
Since from his joyous eyes a twinkle gleams  
So warm with life and light it ever seems  
Spraying in mists of sunshine over me,  
And mingled with such rippling ecstasy  
As overleaps his lips in laughing streams.

Ho! look on him, and say if he be old  
Or youthful! Hand in hand with gray old  
Time

He toddled when an infant; and, behold!—  
He hath not aged, but to the lusty prime  
Of babyhood—his brow a trifle bold—  
His hair a raveled nimbus of gray gold.

## AN INVOCATION

SWEET Sleep, with mellow palms trailed  
listlessly  
Above mine eyelids, folding out the light  
Of coming day, and shutting in the night  
That gave but now such wondrous dreams to me—  
Bide with me yet with thy dear sorcery,  
Until once more I grow forgetful quite  
Of all the cares that blur my waking sight  
With dim, regretful tears! I beg of thee  
To lift again thy wand with magic filled,  
And filter through my faith the words: Behold,  
Aladdin, as thou badest me, I build  
A new dream o'er the ruins of the old—  
Thine all eternal palace, silver-silled,  
And walled with harps, and roofed with crowns  
of gold!

## FROM BELOW

IN the dim summer night they were leaning alone  
From the balcony over the walk ;  
He, careless enough, one had guessed by the tone  
Of his voice and his murmurous talk ;  
And she—well, her laugh flowed as sweet to the  
breeze  
As the voice of the faint violin  
That ran, with a ripple of ivory keys,  
Through the opera warbled within.

. . . . .

In the odorous locust-boughs trailed o'er the eaves,  
The nightingale paused in his tune,  
And the mute katydid hid away in the leaves  
That were turned from the smile of the moon :  
And the man sat alone, with his fingers clenched  
tight  
O'er a heart that had failed in its beat,  
While the passers-by saw but a spatter of light  
Where he dropped his cigar in the street.

## GLAMOUR

WAS it in the misty twilight, or the midnight,  
or the morning,  
Or was it in the glare of noon, or dazzle of the  
day,  
That, half asleep and half awake, and without word  
or warning,  
My fancy, slowly slipping earthly anchor, sailed  
away?

O leave me and my lazy dream a little while  
together,  
Blending each within the other as we waken in  
the dawn,  
With languid lids anointed by the balmy summer  
weather  
As it wells above the casement that our vision  
swoons upon!

Linger with me yet a little, O my lazy dream! nor  
leave me;  
Though we hear the swallows twitter, it is only in  
their sleep:

And I want you just to cling to me and love me and  
deceive me

A little ere the morning when I waken but to  
weep.

Ah! dream of mine, I see you growing clearer yet  
and clearer;

Your fairy face comes back again from out the  
misty past,

And your smile shines on before you till, approach-  
ing ever nearer,

It gilds your grave into a glorious trysting-place  
at last.

And you lean there—waiting for me—here's the  
dainty rose-leaf letter

That you sent me, saying, "Meet me here, and  
share my deep delight,

For my love by this long silence is so truer, purer,  
better,

That you will taste of Heaven when you touch  
my lips to-night."

Was it in the misty twilight, or the midnight, or the  
morning,

Or was it in the glare of noon, or dazzle of the  
day,

That, half asleep and half awake, and without word  
or warning,

My fancy, slowly slipping earthly anchor, sailed  
away?

## SILENCE

THOUSANDS and thousands of hushed  
                  years ago,  
    Out on the edge of Chaos, all alone  
    I stood on peaks of vapor, high upthrown  
Above a sea that knew nor ebb nor flow,  
Nor any motion won of winds that blow,  
    Nor any sound of watery wail or moan,  
    Nor lisp of wave, nor wandering undertone  
Of any tide lost in the night below.  
So still it was, I mind me, as I laid  
    My thirsty ear against mine own faint sigh  
To drink of that, I sipped it, half afraid  
    'Twas but the ghost of a dead voice spilled by  
The one starved star that tottered through the  
                  shade  
    And came tiptoeing toward me down the sky.

## PUCK

O IT was Puck! I saw him yesternight  
Swung up betwixt a phlox-top and the rim  
Of a low crescent moon that cradled him,  
Whirring his rakish wings with all his might,  
And pursing his wee mouth, that dimpled white  
And red, as though some dagger keen and slim  
Had stung him there, while ever faint and dim  
His eery warblings piped his high delight:  
Till I, grown jubilant, shrill answer made,  
At which all suddenly he dropped from view;  
And peering after, 'neath the everglade,  
What was it, do you think, I saw him do?  
I saw him peeling dewdrops with a blade  
Of starshine sharpened on his bat-wing shoe.

## A MORTUL PRAYER

O H! Thou that veileth from all eyes  
The glory of Thy face,  
And setteth throned behind the skies  
In Thy abiding-place:  
Though I but dimly reco'nize  
Thy purposes of grace;  
And though with weak and wavering  
Deserts, and vex'd with fears,  
I lift the hands I can not wring  
All dry of sorrow's tears,  
Make puore my prayers that daily wing  
Theyr way unto Thy ears!

Oh! with the hand that tames the flood  
And smooths the storm to rest,  
Make ba'mmy dewes of all the blood  
That stormeth in my brest,  
And so refresh my hart to bud  
And bloom the loveliest.  
Lull all the clammer of my soul  
To silunce; bring release



Unto the brane still in controle  
Of doubts; bid sin to cease,  
And let the waves of pashun roll  
And kiss the shores of peace.

Make me to love my feller man—  
Yea, though his bitterness  
Doth bite as only adders can—  
Let *me* the fault confess,  
And go to him and clasp his hand  
And love him none the less.  
So keep me, Lord, ferever **free**  
From vane concete er whim;  
And he whose pius eyes can see  
My faults, however dim,—  
Oh! let him pray the least fer me,  
And me the most fer him.

## A ROUGH SKETCH

I CAUGHT, for a second, across the crowd—  
Just for a second, and barely that—  
A face, pox-pitted and evil-browed,  
Hid in the shade of a slouch-rim'd hat—  
With small gray eyes, of a look as keen  
As the long, sharp nose that grew between.

And I said: 'Tis a sketch of Nature's own,  
Drawn i' the dark o' the moon, I swear,  
On a tatter of Fate that the winds have blown  
Hither and thither and everywhere—  
With its keen little sinister eyes of gray,  
And nose like the beak of a bird of prey!

## GRANDFATHER SQUEERS

“MY grandfather Squeers,” said The Raggedy  
Man,  
As he solemnly lighted his pipe and began—

“The most indestructible man, for his years,  
And the grandest on earth, was my grandfather  
Squeers!

“He said, when he rounded his threescore-and-ten,  
‘I’ve the hang of it now and can do it again!’

“He had frozen his heels so repeatedly, he  
Could tell by them just what the weather would be;

“And would laugh and declare, ‘while *the Almanac*  
would  
Most falsely prognosticate, *he* never could!’

“Such a hale constitution had grandfather Squeers  
That, though he’d used ‘*navy*’ for sixty-odd years,



Edward Chandler Ensigny 1882

"My Grandfather Squeers"



"He still chewed a dime's worth six days of the  
week,  
While the seventh he passed with a chew in each  
cheek.

"Then my grandfather Squeers had a singular  
knack  
Of sitting around on the small of his back,

"With his legs like a letter Y stretched o'er the  
grate  
Wherein 'twas his custom to ex-pec-tor-ate.

"He was fond of tobacco in *manifold* ways,  
And would sit on the door-step, of sunshiny days,

"And smoke leaf-tobacco he'd raised strictly for  
The pipe he'd used all through the Mexican War."

And The Raggedy Man said, refilling the bowl  
Of his *own* pipe and leisurely picking a coal

From the stove with his finger and thumb, "You  
can see  
What a tee-nacious habit he's fastened on me !

"And my grandfather Squeers took a special delight  
In pruning his corns every Saturday night

"With a horn-handled razor, whose edge he excused  
By saying 'twas one that his grandfather used ;

"And, though deeply etched in the haft of the same  
Was the ever-euphonious Wostenholm's name,

" 'Twas my grandfather's custom to boast of the  
blade  
As 'a Seth Thomas razor—the best ever made!"

"No Old Settlers' Meeting, or Pioneers' Fair,  
Was complete without grandfather Squeers in the  
chair,

"To lead off the program by telling folks how  
'He used to shoot deer where the Court-house  
stands now'—

"How 'he felt, of a truth, to live over the past,  
When the country was wild and unbroken and vast,

" 'That the little log cabin was just plenty fine  
For himself, his companion, and fambly of nine!—

" 'When they didn't have even a pump, or a tin,  
But drunk surface-water, year out and year in,

" 'From the old-fashioned gourd that was sweeter,  
by odds,  
Than the goblets of gold at the lips of the gods!"

Then The Raggedy Man paused to plaintively say  
It was clockin' along to'rds the close of the day—

And he'd *ought* to get back to his work on the  
lawn,—

Then dreamily blubbered his pipe and went on:

"His teeth were imperfect—my grandfather owned  
That he couldn't eat oysters unless they were  
'boned';

"And his eyes were so weak, and so feeble of sight,  
He couldn't sleep with them unless, every night,

"He put on his spectacles—all he possessed,—  
Three pairs—with his goggles on top of the rest.

"And my grandfather always, retiring at night,  
Blew down the lamp-chimney to put out the light;

"Then he'd curl up on edge like a shaving, in bed,  
And puff and smoke pipes in his sleep, it is said:

"And would snore oftentimes, as the legends relate,  
Till his folks were wrought up to a terrible state,—

"Then he'd snort, and rear up, and roll over; and  
there  
In the subsequent hush they could hear him chew  
air.

"And so glaringly bald was the top of his head  
That many's the time he has musingly said,



"As his eyes journeyed o'er its reflex in the glass,—  
'I must set out a few signs of *Keep Off the Grass!*'

"So remarkably deaf was my grandfather Squeers  
That he had to wear lightning-rods over his ears

"To even hear thunder—and oftentimes then  
He was forced to request it to thunder again."

## MY LADDIE WI' THE BASHFU' GRACE

MY laddie wi' the bashfu' grace,  
That darena spak the tender loe  
That glints o'er a' thy bonny face  
Like winter sunset on the snow,—  
Gin ye wad only tak my hand,  
And ask, wi' pressure fond and true,  
My heart—my heart wad understand,  
And gie its loe to you.

But sin' ye winna spak me free,  
Or darena tak the langin' tip  
O' ain puir finger,—come to me  
In mirk o' nicht and touch my lip—  
Then a' the glowin' universe  
Will bloom wi' stars, and flow'rs, and a',  
And God's ain sel' abide wi' us,  
Nor ever gang awa'.

## A TRESS OF HAIR

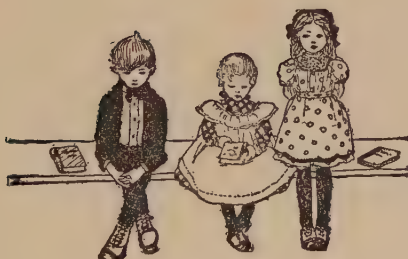
THIS tress of hair my sweetheart sent to me,  
And so I bent above it tenderly  
And kissed the dainty bow  
That bound the wisp of sunshine, thrilled forsooth,  
Because her lips had nestled there—in truth,  
She told me so.

And I remember, reading that, the flush  
That fevered all my face, and the heart's hush  
And hurry in my ears;  
And how the letter trembled and grew blurred  
Until my eyes could read no other word—  
For happy tears.

This tress of hair! Why, I did hug and hold  
It here against my heart, and call it gold  
With Heaven's own luster lit;  
And I did stroke and smooth its gleaming strands,  
And pet and fondle it with foolish hands,  
And talk to it!

And now I pray God's blessing may alight  
Upon the orange flowers she wears to-night.

Her features—keep them fair,  
Dear Lord, but let her lips not quite forget  
The love they kindled once is gilding yet  
This tress of hair.













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